The Middlebury Campus

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ZEITGEIST 2022

Zeitgeist 4.0: The Spirit of the Times, in transition

By TONY SJODIN
Senior News Editor

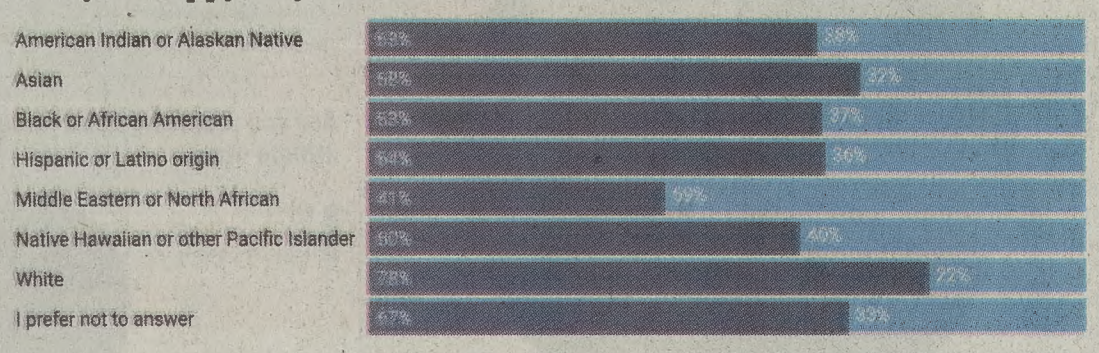
The Middlebury we know today is not the same as the one we surveyed during the first Zeitgeist student body survey in 2019. We may have expected the college to change over these four years, and it did — entire classes matriculated and graduated, presidents were elected and impeached, social trends rose and fell, boats got stuck and unstuck in canals — but few could have foreseen the transformation that our community and our world would experience in that time.

The theme of this year's Zeitgeist survey is transition, a word we felt encompassed this moment in Middlebury's history and the lives of its students. As the college moved towards "endemic" management of Covid-19 this spring — lifting mask mandates and ending routine surveillance testing — social life at Middlebury largely returned to crowded dining halls and weekend parties. In a microcosm of the nation, students, staff and faculty have confronted the strange in-between of pandemic life and post-pandemic aspirations in classrooms, dining halls and residential buildings.

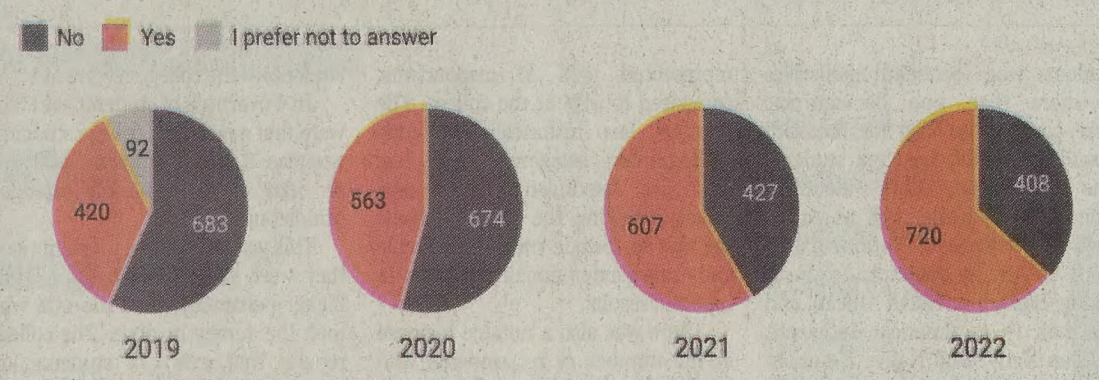
At the same time, most students are experiencing this not as a return of the old staples of campus life, but rather as their first "normal" semesters of college. Half of our respondents this year started at Middlebury in fall 2020 or later; they have never known a pre-pandemic college experience. This semester, members of the class of 2023 — even as rising seniors — celebrated their first spring break of college or jetted off to fill schools abroad for the first time in years. And the class of 2022 will graduate this spring as the last grade to have seen a full pre-pandemic year at Middlebury.

As a new generation of Middlebury students inherits a college fundamentally reshaped by the pandemic, we asked them to reflect on what changed and what stayed the same. Did the Covid-19 pandemic change students' post-grad priorities? How often do they cry? What's the most pressing issue of our day? What's one thing students are looking forward to in the next year? And of course, are Middlebury students — truly — happy?

Are you happy? By race

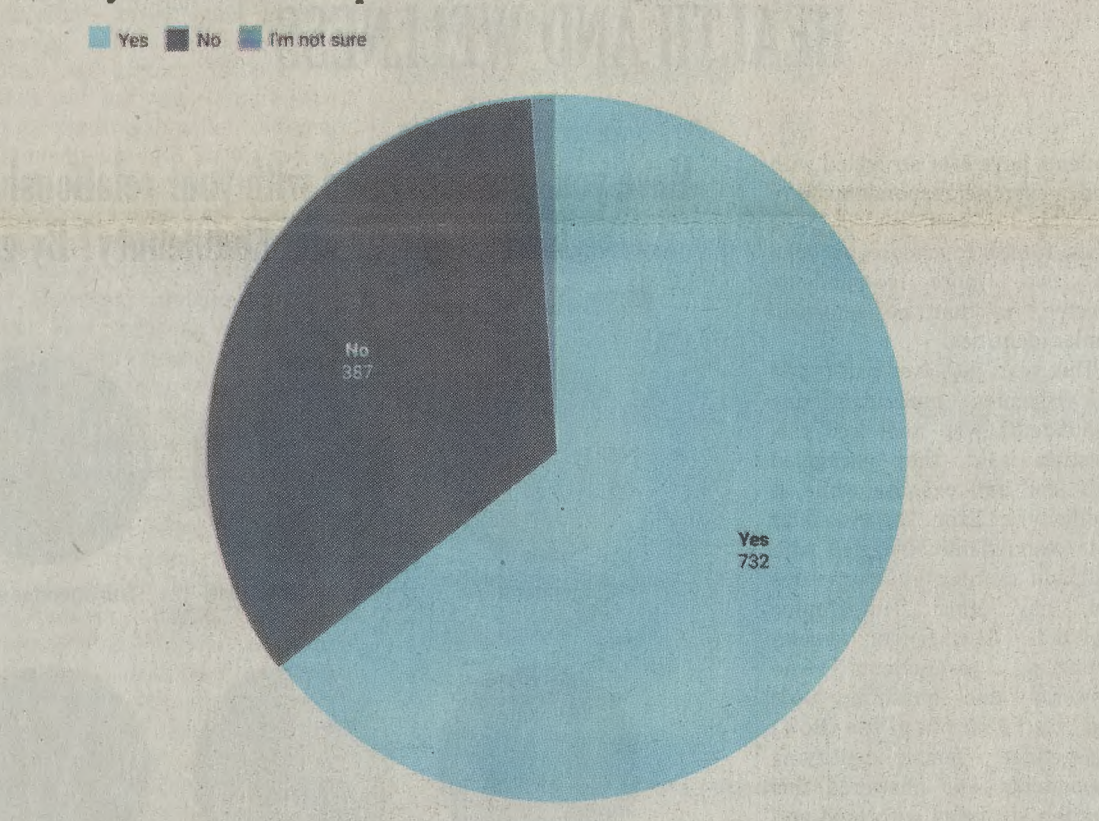


Have you ever broken the Honor Code?



In the past 12 months, with how many partners have you engaged in consenual sexual activity?

Have you ever tested positive for Covid-19?



▶ *Zeitgeist findings continue on Page 2.*
View our full Zeitgeist findings online at go/zg.

75% percent of students report being happy, but the numbers look different by race, gender and financial aid status

By EMMANUEL TAMRAT
Digital Director

"Are you happy?" As we considered adding the question to this year's Zeitgeist and eventually asked it of our peers, some students — including a few members of our staff — were not so happy with the question itself.

Fortunately, a vast majority of question respondents (75%) answered "yes," while just under one-quarter of question respondents said "no." The rate at which participants selected "yes" decreased, however, for respondents who said they are queer, indicated they receive financial aid, or selected a race or ethnicity category besides "white."

Nearly four-fifths (78%) of white-identifying respondents who answered this question reported being happy, a rate higher than any other racial or ethnic identity. Respondents who selected identities other than "white" answered "yes" at a rate of at least 10 percentage points below students who selected "white." Question respondents who identified as Middle Eastern or North African (MENA) reported being unhappy more than any other racial or ethnic group, with only 41% answering "yes." Notably, the Zeitgeist survey was live during the weeks after the Muslim Student Association's prayer space was desecrated, This event could partially explain some of the responses from those who identified as MENA, since Islam is the dominant religion in the region.

Over three-fourths (78%) of cisgender female respondents who answered this question responded "yes", the highest of any gender identity. In stark contrast, just over a quarter (27%) of transgender male respondents who answered this question said they were happy. Transgender male respondents were also the only gender identity to say "no" more often than "yes".

Of the respondents, 732 students — 65% — said they had tested positive for Covid-19 at some point. Reported Covid-19 cases early in the spring semester showed hundreds of students testing positive, with peaks reaching over 200 active cases at a time.

Overall, students ranked their mental health as best in fall 2019 and worst in fall 2020. Mental health on average reportedly improved in spring 2021 and continued to increase in subsequent semesters. However, mental health improved only marginally from spring 2021 to fall 2021; that fall wasa semester marked by student crises on campus and increased rates of Covid-19. Mental health continued to improve this semester, with

Continued on Page 3

IN TRANSITION

Students reflects on what's changed and what's next

By RILEY BOARD
Editor in Chief

This year, our Zeitgeist survey was released to students just weeks after the end of a two-year mask mandate at Middlebury. This change marked, in many ways, a monumental moment of transition in the Covid-19 pandemic. For somewhere around half the students at the college, it was the first time at Middlebury that they had experienced the school without masks.

Beyond that, college is its own period of immense growth and transition for so many. As we navigate this period of transition at Middlebury and in life as a whole, we wanted to know two things from students: What's one thing that has changed about you in the past year? And what's one thing you are looking forward to in the next year?

In the past year, students appear to have undergone a lot of change. Some have been negative and some have been positive; they range from "I have become much more cynical in my friendships, as I have been frequently disappointed and let down" to "my overall self confidence and happiness have increased significantly."

Respondents referenced eating disorder relapses, sexual assault and recovering from a period of drug-induced psychosis.

Other respondents alerted us to small life changes. One person wrote "I like cucumbers now" while another said that their hairstyle had changed many times over.

Others went through big romantic life changes. More than 40 participants cited getting into or getting out of a relationship as a change in the last year. At least twelve students cited breakups in the past year.

"I broke up with my partner of three years who I had thought I'd be with forever, and started dating someone so kind and respectful and feel much happier," one student said. Many mentioned the end of three- or four-year relationships, or

Continued on Page 4

LOCAL

Native American tribes to no longer pay property taxes in Vermont
By SUSANNA SCHATZ

Kick Start grant helps new businesses to success on Main Street, Marble Works
By MAGGIE REYNOLDS

▶ PAGE 5

OPINIONS

Unpacking the stats on happiness
By THE EDITORIAL BOARD

Notes from the Desk: Is it time to reconsider our mascot?
By CHARLIE KEOHANE

▶ PAGE 8

ARTS & CULTURE

Nocturne Arts Festival: A campus transformed
By OLIVIA PINTAIR

Cliff Hanger: The Outbound Collective films a modern outdoors
By MAGGIE BRYAN

▶ PAGE 9

SPORTS

Women's track & field wins third NESCAC title
By LEXI LINAFELTER

Jordan Saint-Louis '24 gives a look behind the lens filming Midd Varsity Games
By RYAN HEINZERLING

▶ PAGE 9

MULTIMEDIA

Photos from the Desk: Midd in four seasons
By FLORENCE WU

Behind the curtain at the Marquis Theater
By EMILY HOGAN

▶PAGE 7

ZEITGEIST

Who took this year's survey?

By TONY SJODIN
Senior News Editor

A total of 1,134 students took the fourth annual Zeitgeist survey, answering questions that ranged from "Do you have a car at Middlebury?" to "How often do you cry?"

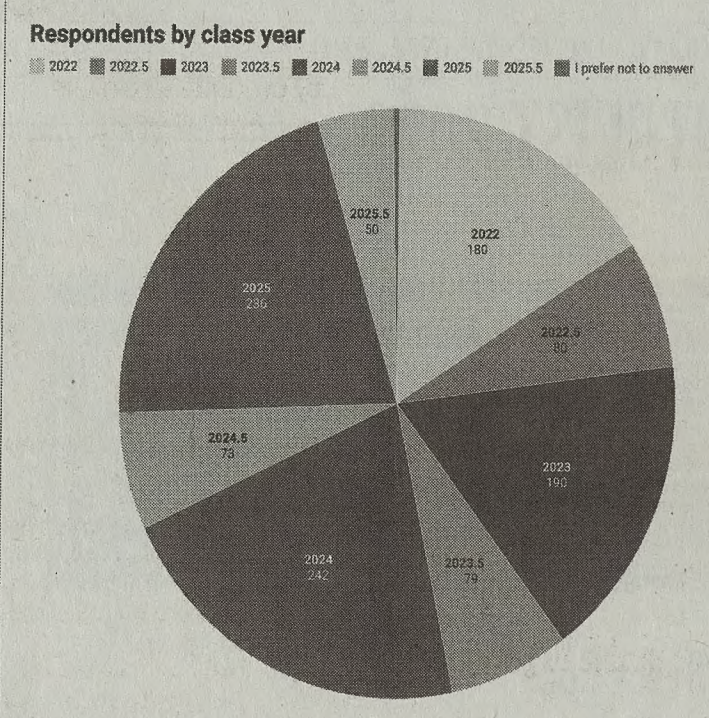
With a total spring enrollment of 2,634 according to the Spring 2022 Enrollment profile, these students represent 43% of the college's degree-seeking undergraduates.

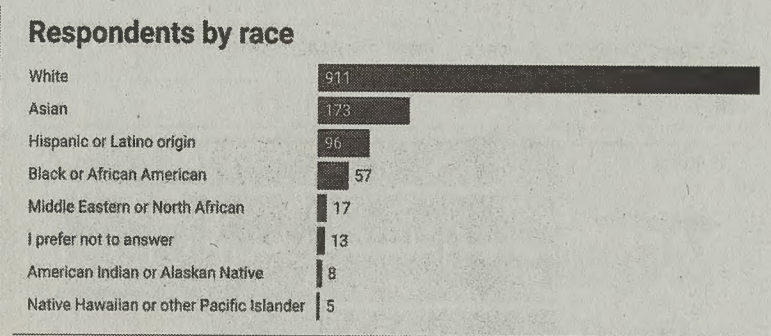
Participants were roughly equally distributed across all class years, with the class of 2024 registering the highest number of responses at 242. The class of 2022 had the fewest responses among reg classes.

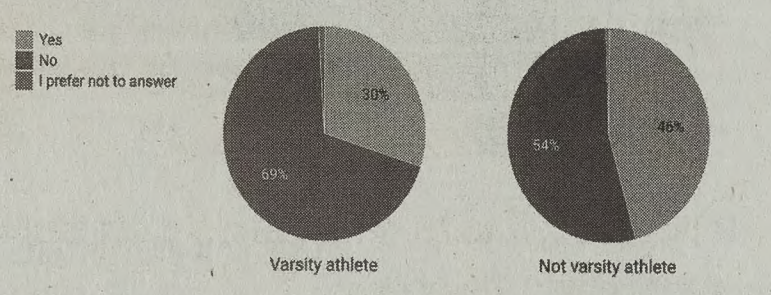
Many respondents, however, matriculated in a different year than they are now part of. Nearly 20% more participants said they initially intended to graduate with the class of 2022 than said they will actually do so this spring. All four years showed a significant uptick in the number of students now graduating with the Feb class than originally anticipated, with respondents now in the class of 2023.5 more than doubling.

Hundreds of students took one or more semesters off during the Covid-19 pandemic, leading to nearly 300 more students enrolled on campus than typical in fall 2021. The college housed students at the Bread Loaf satellite campus, the Marriott hotel and the Inn on the Green to accommodate the overenrolled student body but was able to discontinue use of Bread Loaf in the spring as the class of 2021.5 graduated and more students were able to study abroad.

For the first time this year, we removed the option to select "Multiracial/Biracial" from our survey and instead offered respondents the option to check all boxes that applied.




Respondents by race
White 911
Asian 173
Hispanic or Latino origin 96
Black or African American 57
Middle Eastern or North African 17
I prefer not to answer 13
American Indian or Alaskan Native 8
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander 5



Students who identified themselves in more than one demographic were counted in both for breakout visualizations. Of the 1,134 students who responded, 80% identified themselves as white, 15% as Asian, 8.5% as Hispanic or Latino, 5% as Black or African American, 1.5% as Middle Eastern or North African, and less than 1% as American Indian or Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander.

According to the Spring 2022 Enrollment profile — which does not allow students to identify themselves in more than one category — 58.6% of the student body identifies as white, 7.5% as Asian American, 4.7% as Black/African American, 10.8% as Hispanic/Latino, and 5.9% as two or more races. The college's enrollment data also reports international students as one racial demographic category, representing 11.6% of the student body.

Cisgender female students were by far the largest group of respondents, representing 58% of Zeitgeist responses compared to 53% of students according to the enrollment profile. Cisgender male students represented 35% of respondents, compared to 47% at the college. The Campus has historically excluded demographic categories with less than five respondents to preserve privacy, making the 2022 Zeitgeist the first to include transgender male and transgender female students in reported results.

There was also a notable increase in the number of respondents who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer or questioning. Compared to approximately one third of last year's respondents, 41% of participants identified in this group.

Cisgender female students were far more likely to identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer or questioning than cisgender male students. Since cisgender female students also represented a higher proportion of Zeitgeist participants than the student body, this discrepency likely skewed overall responses to whether students identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer or questioning.

Of Zeitgeist participants, 43% said they were receiving need-based financial aid. According to the Student Financial Services webpage, 51% of students at the college receive aid.

Just over 10% of students said they were first generation college students, whereas 8.8% of students said one or both of their parents attended Middlebury.

This year, 17% of respondents said they were varsity athletes, a slightly higher percentage than the 15% who took the survey in 2021. The college reports that 27% of students are varsity athletes.

Varsity athletes were also far more likely to respond that they were white and that they were not on financial aid than the general student population. Of the students that said they are white, 20% said that they participated in a varsity sport, while only 8% of students in all other race and ethnicity demographics combined said they did. Varsity athletes were fifteen percentage points less likely to be on financial aid than respondents in the rest of the student population.

More than half of respondents said they were from New England (Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Rhode Island and Massachusetts) or the Mideast region (New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Delaware and Pennsylvania) of the United States, followed by respondents from the Far West (Washington, Oregon and California). Approximately 9% of respondents said they were from outside of the United States.

Slightly more than half of respondents said their hometown is suburban, while 30% said their hometown is urban and 18% said their hometown is rural.

Of Zeitgeist participants, 13% said they identify or had at some point identified as a student with a disability while at the college. Just over 16% said they identify as neurodivergent, an umbrella term for people whose brains function differently than what is considered "typical" and can include autism, ADHD, dyslexia and more.

The majors with the highest number of respondents were Environmental Studies (all tracks combined) at 11%, Economics at 10%, Computer Science at 7.8%, Political Science at 6.2%, Neuroscience at 6% and English and American Literatures at 5.3%. Exactly one in seven students said they had not yet declared a major.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Continued from Page 1

fewer students responding with a rating of "1 – Worst" than in previous semesters.

More than four in 10 (42%) respondents to this question reported using counseling services at Middlebury. Nearly half (48%) of respondents who receive financial aid and answered this question have used counseling services at Middlebury, a difference of 10 percentage points over students who do not receive financial aid.

Just under one quarter (24%) of respondents reported having survived sexual assault, an increase of 4 percentage points from 2021. When asked if this occurred while they were on Middlebury's campus or on a Middlebury program, 39% of those who said they were survivors of sexual assault and chose to answer this question said "yes."

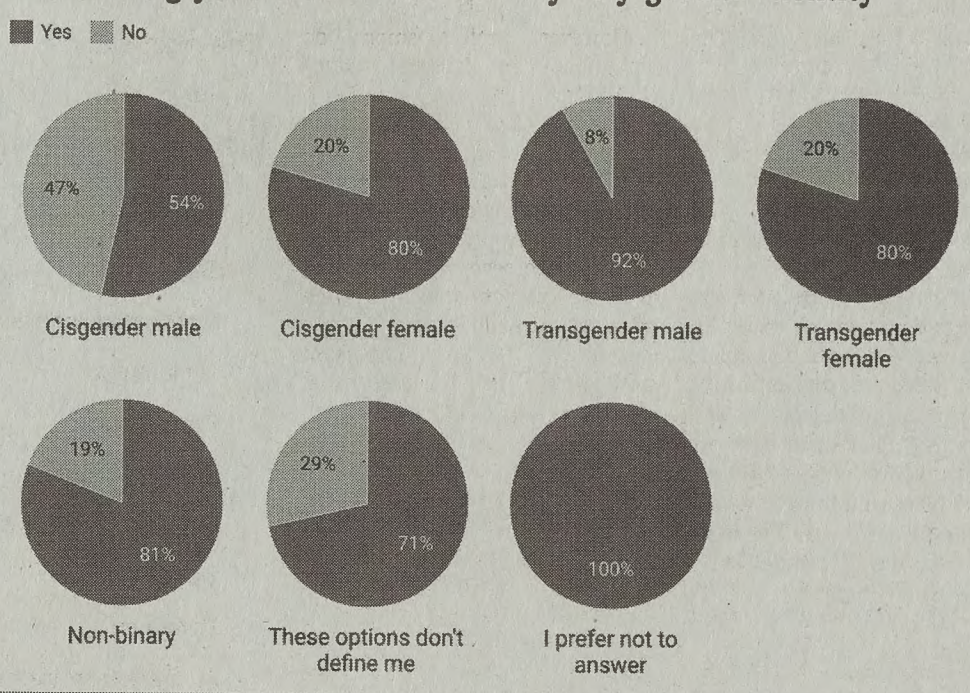
Sixty-five percent of question respondents have reported using alcohol or drugs to cope with stress. Fifteen percent of question respondents in the class of 2023.5 reported using alcohol or drugs frequently to cope with stress, the highest of any other class year, while question respondents in the class of 2025 reportedly use them the least, with 50% responding "never."

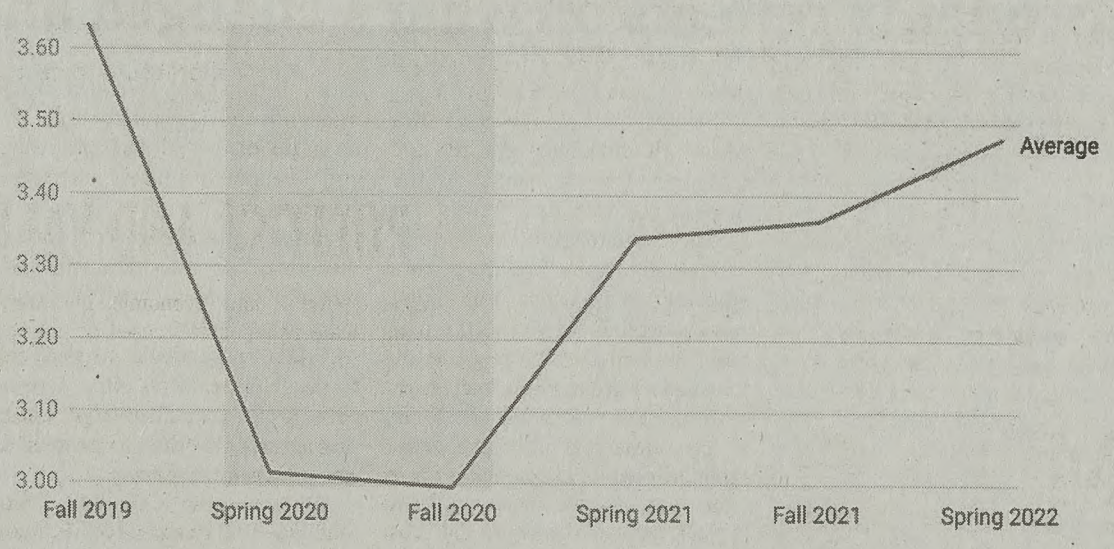
A majority of respondents to this question, 71%, said they have struggled with their relationship to food or exercise during their time at Middlebury, although a smaller percentage of respondents said so than in 2021. In this year's Zeitgeist, we removed the option of selecting "at times" for this question because it asks whether students have ever struggled with food or exercise; respondents were only able to select "yes" or "no." When forced to choose between the two, more respondents selected "yes" than "no" across all gender identities.

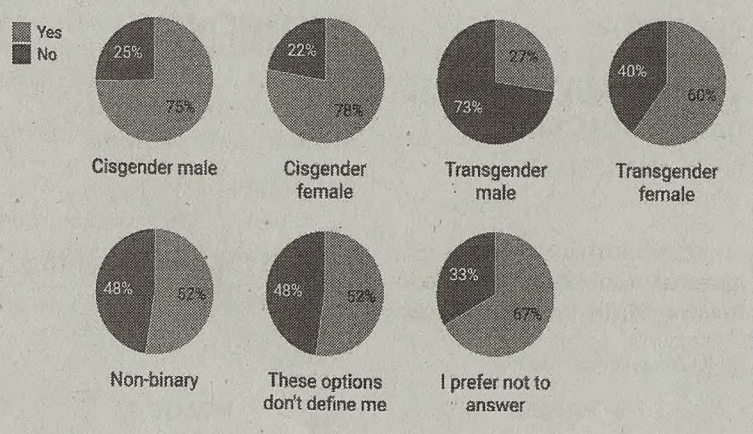
This year, just over half (54%) of cisgender male-identifying respondents who answered this question said they struggled with food and exercise while at Middlebury. Even so, cisgender male respondents struggled with food and exercise at lower rates than any other demographic analyzed. Of cisgender female-identifying respondents who answered this question, 80% said "yes." Four out of five (80%) transgender female-identifying respondents who answered this question struggled with food and exercise, and 92% of transgender male-identifying respondents who answered this question reported the same.

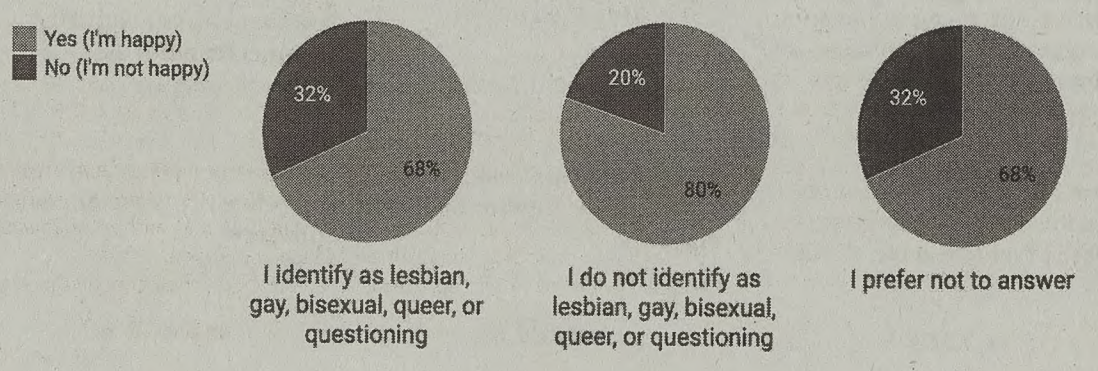
Out of all survey respondents, around 60% reported crying at least once a month, and 50% reported crying a couple times a month or more frequently.

Breaking out the data by gender shows differences in reported rates of crying. Twenty-eight percent of cisgender male students who answered this question reported crying at least once a month, a frequency much lower than reported by respondents of other genders. Respondents who selected "These options don't define me" who answered this question reported crying more frequently than students who selected other gender identities, with 86% of these individuals reporting crying at least once a month.





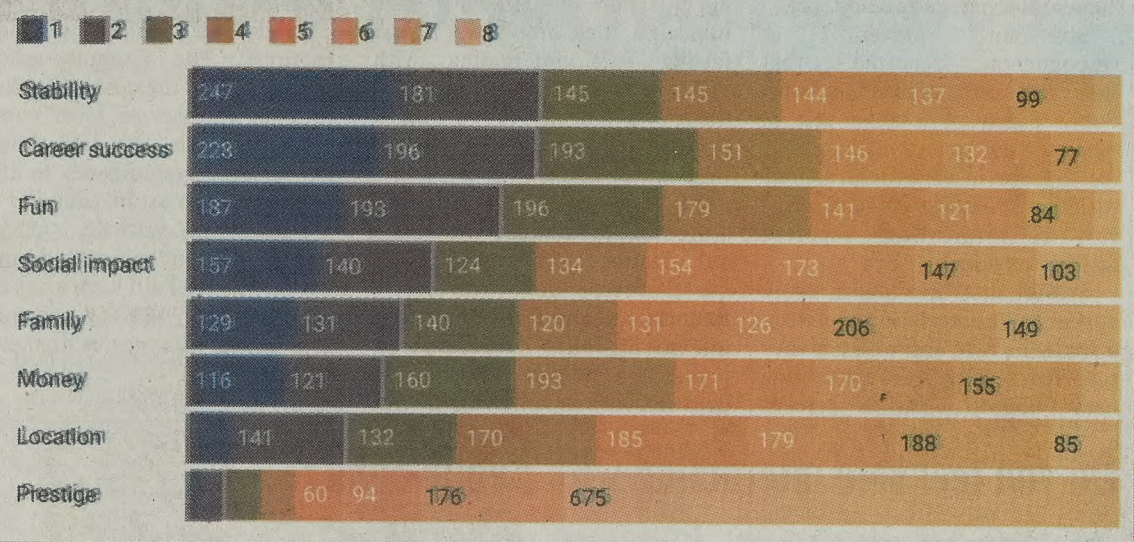




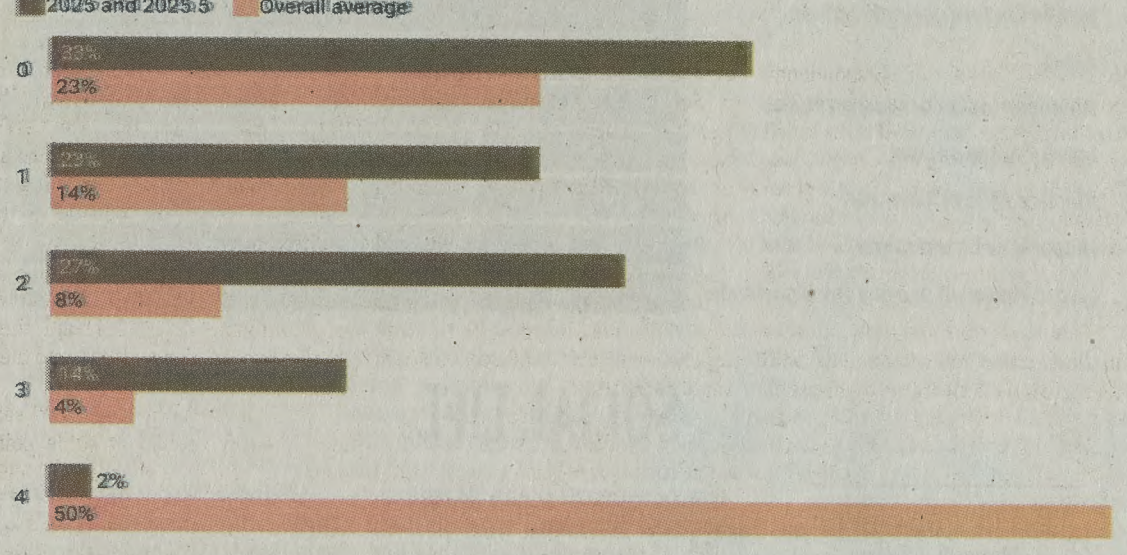
ZEITGEIST

Post-grad priorities

Ranked by what students want most to least,



Of the classes you wanted to take this spring, how many were you unable to get into?



ACADEMICS

By CHARLIE KEOHANE
Editor at Large

The 2021–22 school year has brought students and professors back into classrooms, but academic work happens online far more than before the pandemic. This year's survey also showed another uptick in honor code violations, up from last year's jump.

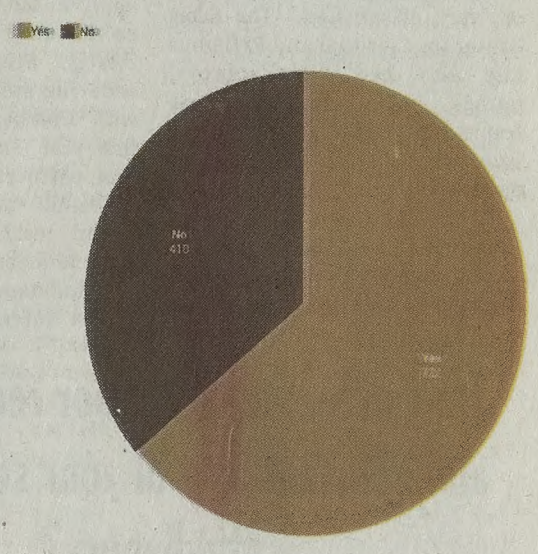
This year, 64% of respondents reported breaking the honor code, compared to 58% last year and 45% in 2020. As in 2021, the most common violation was using unauthorized aid — like translators, Sparknotes and aid from peers — followed by cheating on tests.

About half of respondents reported being able to get into all of the classes they wanted this spring, but first years were less often successful in registration.

Only one third of the class of 2025 and 2025.5 were able to get into all of their desired classes for spring 2022 registration, compared to half of all respondents. For first years, 43% were unable to get into half or more of their classes. This may be a result of increased enrollment, which caused stress among students vying for classes and housing.

The pandemic has altered life at Middlebury and beyond, with about 64% of students reporting that Covid-19 has changed their academic and postgraduate priorities. The top priority of students was stability, followed closely by career success, fun and social impact. Prestige, notably, was ranked eighth far more often than any other selection.

Do you feel the Covid-19 pandemic has changed your academic and post-grad priorities?



SEX AND LOVE

By KATIE FUTTERMAN
News Editor

"Look to your left, look to your right: Two out of three of you will marry a Middlebury graduate," alumni recall former college President Olin Robison saying each commencement during his 15-year tenure. His dramatic proclamations were a gross exaggeration — only 17% of alumni married other Middlebury graduates between 1915 and 1991. Still, the rumor of love floating through the air on campus persists.

Similar to previous years, The Campus asked Middlebury students about their love lives in this year's Zeitgeist survey. Survey questions compared students' romantic experiences to those they wish they had, asked what drives them to seek intimacy and cataloged changes in sexuality.

Overall, Middlebury students desire more monogamy — and more commitment — than they have had the opportunity to experience here thus far.

Since coming to Middlebury, 47% of respondents indicated they have been in a committed, monogamous relationship at some point. Meanwhile, 70% said they would ideally have a committed, monogamous relationship right now.

But relationships at Middlebury can be hard to define and often don't fit the typical committed mold. Forty-two percent of respondents have been in a "slightly-monogamous thing," but far fewer selected that as their ideal type of relationship — only 27%.

An even further divide exists between one-night stands; 52% of respondents reported having had a one-night stand while only 11% reported that one would be ideal.

Students who are extremely satisfied with the college's romantic scene made up only 8.5% of respondents. A little over a quarter of respondents reported being neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, and 13% of respondents said they were extremely dissatisfied.

Students reported having more sex this year. While 81% of question respondents reported having consensual sex with at least one partner this year, only 73% did last year — more than a nine-percentage-point difference. Students are also having sex with more people. About one in six question respondents had more than five sexual partners this year versus one in 14 last year.

However, relationships do not seem to be all about sex for Middlebury students.

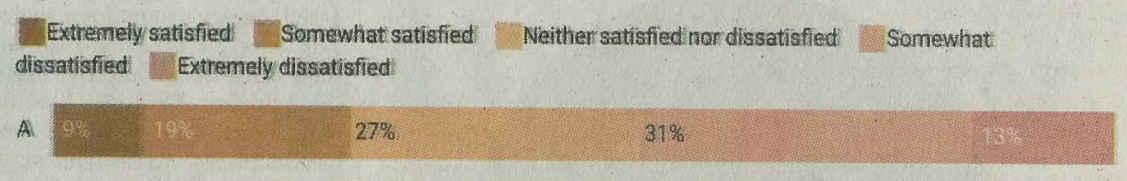
The leading reason students reported pursuing romantic and sexual encounters at Middlebury was companionship, which made up 80% of responses. Sex came in as a close second with 66% of question respondents reporting it as a reason for pursuing these encounters. Other important motivations include non-sexual intimacy, loneliness, exploration and external validation.

Things are far from constant. About a quarter of respondents — 26% — described their sexuality differently than when they first came to Middlebury, and 11% said they are not sure.

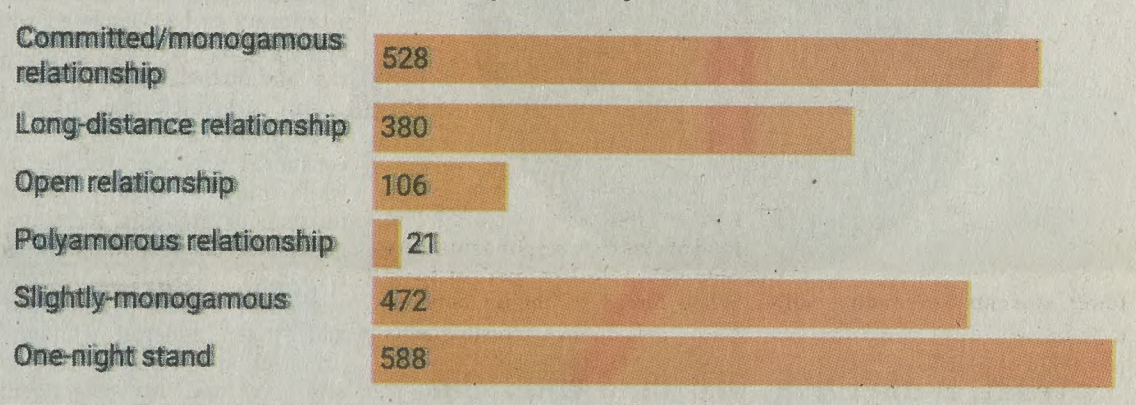
While The Campus cannot tell you how to find romance and sex at Middlebury, we can tell you how other students report finding sexual and romantic partners.

Just over half of students who responded to the survey met romantic or sexual partners at parties or gatherings, compared to only 44% last year. Twenty-three percent of respondents met a partner through a dating app this year, an uptick from 21% in 2021.

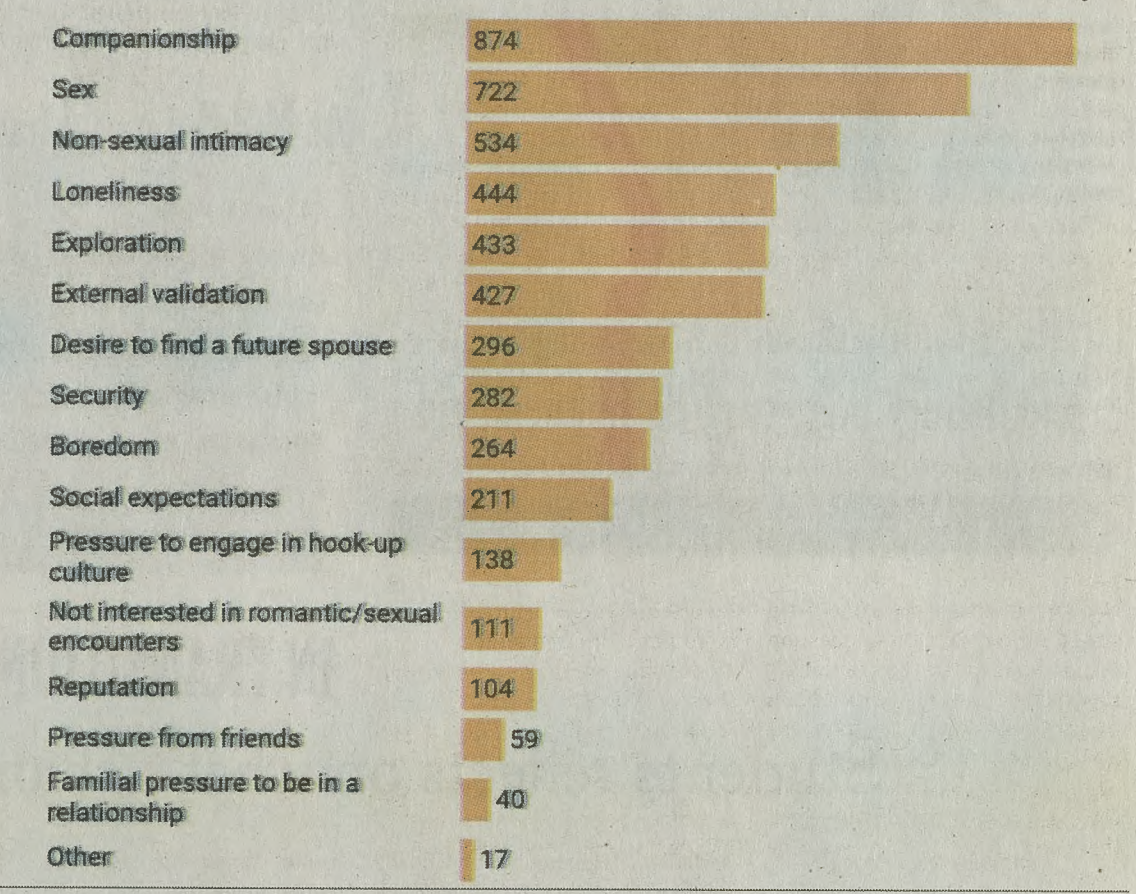
How satisfied are you with the romantic scene at Middlebury?



Since coming to Middlebury, have you ever had a:



Why do you pursue romantic/sexual encounters at Middlebury?



POLITICS AND VALUES

By IDEAL DOWLING
Editor at Large

Middlebury students overwhelmingly care about politics. When asked how much they care about politics, only 1.4% of respondents said "I don't care at all" and 3.0% answered "I actively avoid thinking/talking about politics." The remainder of respondents said they care a little bit (19%), a lot about a few specific issues (33%) or a lot about a wide range of issues (43%).

Middlebury also leans very liberal, according to students' self-assessments. More than 1,000 of the 1,126 students who responded to this question described their political views as at five or below on a scale of zero to 10, with zero being the most liberal and 10 being the most conservative. Most students placed themselves somewhere from zero to three, making the moderate but left-leaning students who placed themselves at a four seem conservative relative to the rest of campus.

So, what does Middlebury's politically active, liberal student body care most about? When we asked "What do you define as the most pressing issue of our day?" in the 2020 Zeitgeist, climate change was the runaway winner. Climate change, again, dominated the 2021 survey responses, followed by racism and inequality. In 2022, climate change, the climate crisis, unsustainable growth, global warming and ecological destruction remain the most common concerns of the present in students' eyes. Some respondents tied their answer of climate change to related issues like racial justice and capitalist exploitation of people and resources.

Responses including capitalism were also linked to racial capitalism, poverty and economic inequality. One respondent focused directly on the people at the top of the economic scale, writing "the 1%." Another person noted "the disproportionate influence of the rich in our politics" as the most pressing issue.

In addition to capitalism, racism and white supremacy were common answers. Incarceration rates, police brutality and advancing the mission of Black Lives Matter were other responses that reaffirmed the importance of racial equality to the student body.

Given the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine, many students responded either war generally or the violence in Ukraine specifically and the resulting humanitarian crises. Other examples of international politics that came up included the liberation of Palestine and authoritarianism in China and Russia.

A frequent complaint on this year's survey was political polarization and the unwillingness of people to listen to opposing ideas. This polarization was exemplified among the other answers, with one person responding "Right-Wing Nutjobs" and another writing "far left extremists taking over colleges." A number of respondents lamented cancel culture, political correctness, "unchecked wokeness" and people being "overly dramatic / sensitive."

Despite the ongoing threat of Covid-19, the illness was mentioned fewer times than many of the other issues. Some expressed worry about healthcare and getting sick, while others mentioned Covid-19 to complain about continued mask mandates.

Other responses were more personal and Middlebury-specific, with a couple respondents citing "homework" or "classwork" as their biggest problem at the moment. Another asked, "Does Atwater have sea salt caramel ice cream?" and someone else wondered why the college's staff is underpaid.

However, these lighter answers were dispersed between recurring mentions of mental health struggles, both as a general problem and in specific examples like "loneliness," "body image" and "happiness." One student felt that "caring for other people" is something that is missing from our current society, with another echoing that sentiment with a response reading "how we connect with each other."

Other issues that appeared in the responses included education, reproductive rights, xenophobia, fake news and misinformation, unemployment, LGBTQ+ rights, gun control, internet privacy, voting rights, immigration reform and refugee crises, ableism and the patriarchy.

ZEITGEIST

RESOURCES

By ELIZA KING FREEDMAN
Arts & Culture Editor

Middlebury prides itself on offering a plethora of resources to students, but fewer than 30% of Zeitgeist respondents said they are "very satisfied" with any given on-campus resource.

MiddSafe, a student-run sexual assault hotline that is the only listed resource not actually staffed by the college, had one of the highest overall approval ratings, with only 2.0% of respondents to this question saying they were either "somewhat dissatisifed" or "very dissatisfied." The Scott Center for Spiritual and Religious Life also had high approval ratings, with few question respondents saying they were "somewhat dissatisfied" or "very dissatisfied": 1.4%.

The Anderson Freeman Resource Center (AFC) had the lowest combined percentage of students answering "somewhat dissatisfied" or "very dissatisfied" at 0.63%, indicating a high rate of approval. Around 65% of respondents to this question answered that "Does not apply to me/have not used this" for the AFC.

On the other hand, Midd Telehealth and Counseling Services garnered the highest disapproval ratings, showcasing respondents' frustration with mental health services offered at Middlebury.

Instead of addressing whether students were satisfied with the college Department of Public Safety (PubSafe), we asked a slightly different question: "Do you feel safe interacting with PubSafe?"

Students could also select that a particular resource "Does not apply to me/Have not used this" or that they "Do not know what this is." Students were — by a wide margin — most unfamiliar with Compass Mentors, a new first-year mentoring program that partners students and non-academic staff at the college. Other resources that students were less familiar with included the Anderson Freeman Resource Center, International Student and Scholar Services, and MiddSafe.

Sixty-one percent of respondents reported that they feel safe interacting with Public Safety. A total of 12% of respondents reported that they feel unsafe in their interactions with Public Safety officers, while 27% of respondents reported feeling "unsure."

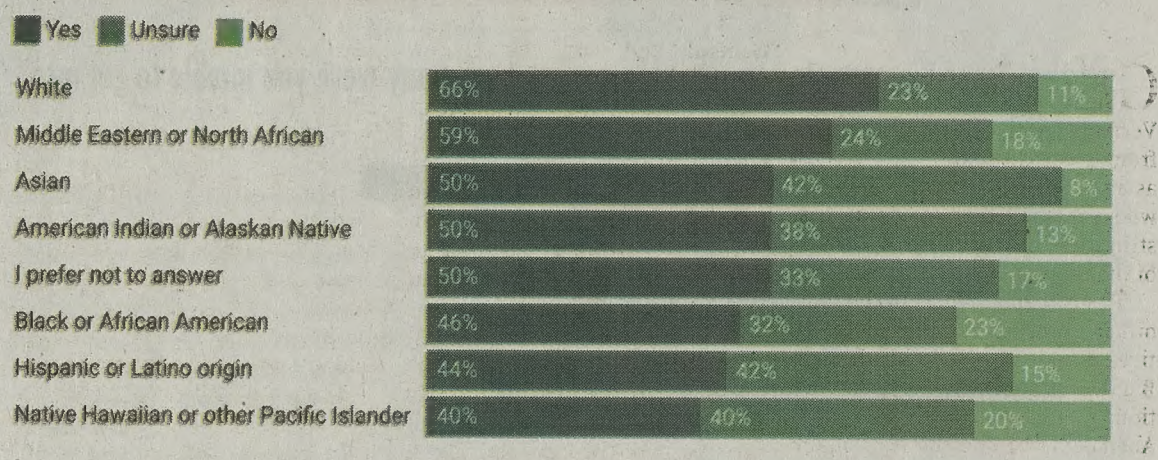
Within that breakdown, there appear to be correlations between a student's race and whether they reported feeling safe interacting with PubSafe. Sixty-six percent of question respondents who indicated they are white report feeling safe interacting with PubSafe, compared to 46% of those who indicated they are Black and 44% of students who selected Hispanic or Latino.

This answer also changes according to students' financial aid status. The number of question respondents who receive financial aid and feel comfortable interacting with PubSafe is 12 percentage points lower than question respondents who do not receive aid.

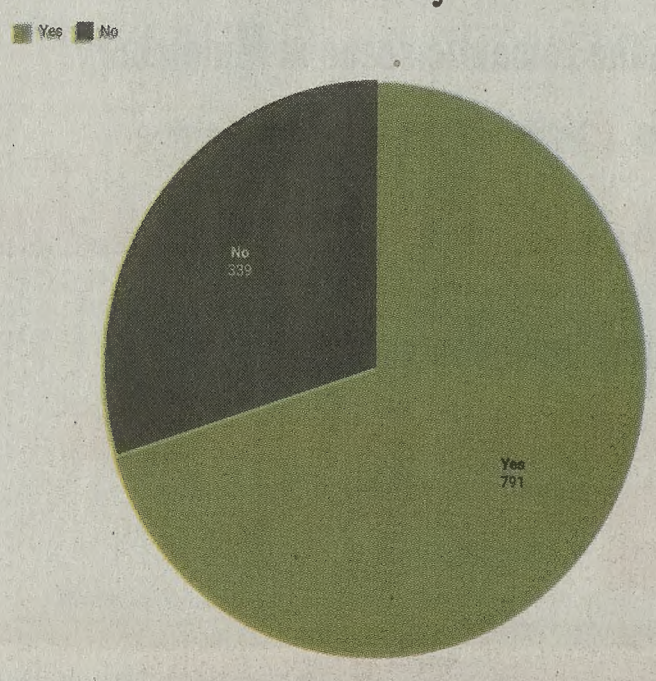
In addition to college-provided resources, The Campus asked about some of the resources that students themselves have come to campus with. The data shows that 47% of respondents to the question have a car on campus.

Within that statistic, 55% of question respondents who do not receive financial aid have a car on campus, while 38% of question respondents who receive financial aid have a car.

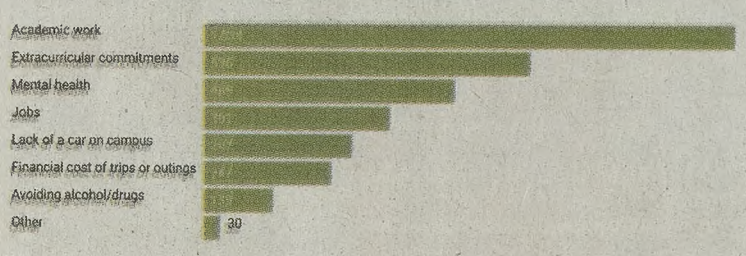
Do you feel safe interacting with Public Safety?



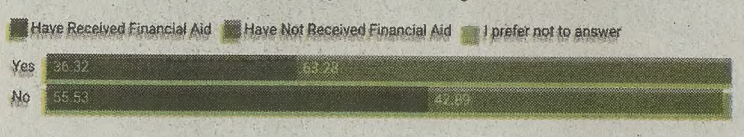
Do you feel that outdoor recreation is an important part of your social life at Middlebury?



What, if anything, prevents you from spending time with friends?



Have family members visited you at Middlebury this year? By financial aid



SOCIAL LIFE

By LUCY TOWNEND
Managing Editor

The section of this year's Zeitgeist focused on social life asked questions on four topics: substance use, visitors to campus, time with friends and the use of the outdoors. An analysis of the data finds that substance use has increased across almost all categories compared to past years, and that participating in certain aspects of campus life — such as visits from family and the outdoors — appears to be correlated with demographic factors, including race and financial aid.

An overwhelming majority of respondents — 1,023 — have consumed alcohol at Middlebury, while only a slightly smaller number of students have used marijuana (807 respondents). The responses "vaped/Juuled/smoked cigarettes," "used psychedelics," and "taken adderall without a prescription" were selected by 486, 207 and 141 respondents respectively.

As compared to last year's survey, slightly more respondents this year had consumed alcohol, with usage going up by around one percentage point. Marijuana use also increased — while only 66% of respondents said they had used marijuana in 2021, 71% of respondents said they had used the substance in this year's survey. In a similar trend, reported psychedelic use rose slightly from last year to this year, by around three percentage points.

While alcohol consumption stayed roughly the same between this year and last year, 82% of respondents said they had partied where alcohol and/or drugs were present in 2021, while 86% of respondents had partied where drugs and alcohol were present this year.

Respondents most frequently answered that academics, with 1,034 reponses, prevented them from spending time with friends. Extracurriculars followed with 636 responses. Notably, mental health, with 488 responses, was selected third-most frequently, while less than 50% of respondents chose "jobs" (361), "a lack of a car on campus" (287) or "financial cost of trips or outings" (247).

For the question "Do you feel that outdoor recreation is an important part of your social life at Middlebury?", a majority of responses — 70% — said "yes."

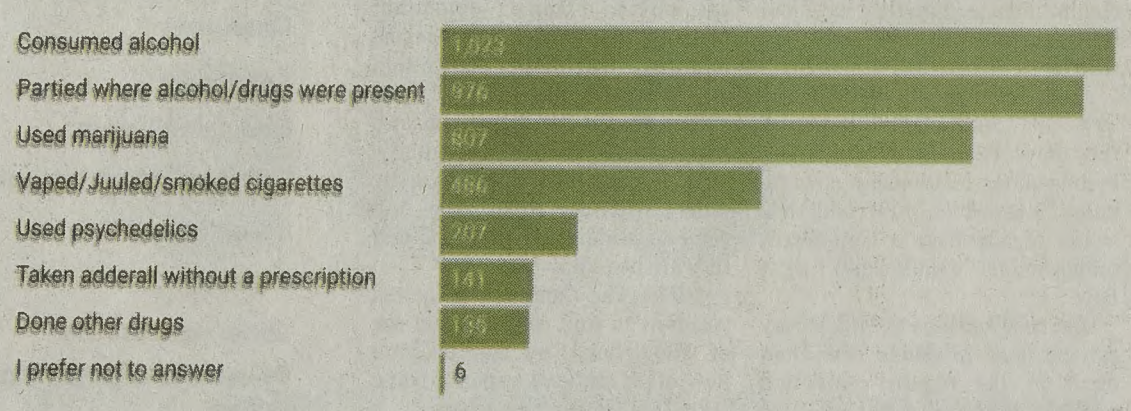
Of those respondents, 75% of those who answered "yes" also said they were white, compared to only 71% of overall respondents.

In contrast, only 5.8% of respondents who answered "yes" were of Hispanic or Latino origin, despite making up 7.5% of all respondents. Only 11.5% of respondents saying "yes" identified as Asian, despite making up around 13% of overall respondents.

Around 66% of respondents have had family members visit them at Middlebury this semester. When broken down by race, this question yields a similar trend to that found in the previous question regarding the outdoors — 80% of respondents whose family members had visited Middlebury were white, even though only 71% of overall respondents to the survey were white.

Respondents whose family visited them were also less likely to be receiving financial aid. Of the respondents who did have family members visit, the majority (63%) did not receive financial aid. Of the respondents who did not have family members visit, the majority (55%) did receive some form of financial aid.

At Middlebury, I have:



IN TRANSITION

Students reflects on what's changed and what's next

Continued from Page 1

long-distance relationships.

On the other hand, many students entered new relationships. Three different respondents said "I have a girlfriend now."

Others cited evolving views on being in relationships. One respondent wrote that in the last year, they had "become less concerned with having a romantic relationship," and another mentioned a change in their, "understanding of my romantic interests and needs."

More than 45 students said that they have gained a new sense of their sexuality, come out, or become more open and confident in their sexuality in the past year. A couple of students mentioned recognizing their asexuality, while others "went from identifying as heterosexual to queer." Many came to terms with their sexuality and queerness, or sexuality. "[I] came out and finally felt like myself on this campus," one respondent said.

Many students also cited a change in their understanding of gender in the past year. Several students came out as transgender, or realized that they were trans or non-binary. Others mentioned an overall change in their perception of or awareness of gender identity. "I have come to terms with my sexual orientation and gender identity," one student wrote.

Nearly 100 responses address changes to mental health in the past year, both negative and positive. More than a dozen students mentioned developing depression, or experiencing worse depression, in the last year. "I have become more depressed, lonely and insecure," one student wrote. Many others talked about heightening anxiety. One person wrote "Middlebury destroyed my mental health," and another said that they had, "never experienced mental health issues until Midd."

Others had improved mental health during the last year. "My mental health has vastly improved, I now feel happy and grateful any average day," one student wrote. "A year ago, I was very depressed."

"I have become more emotionally aware and stronger/more resilient as a person and my anxiety has gotten much better in the past few months," one respondent wrote. "I have a lot more confidence in myself and my future." Another said, "my mental health has dramatically improved."

Friendship and happiness also stood out as common themes in responses. Students wrote that they had found good groups of friends and strengthened their friendships in the last year. Many spoke about increasing happiness in the past ye ar. Many students addressed a changing relationship to their academics — with a dominant theme being less of a prioritization of academic success.

"I value traditional metrics of success a lot less now, and have grown to prioritize my happiness and connections with people around me," one student wrote. Another said, "my attitude towards schoolwork (I have stopped caring)."

One respondent wrote that one thing that had changed for them in the past year was, "learning to step back and putting taking care of myself as my number one priority. Being understanding and listening to myself when it comes to missing class/assignments and taking time off."

Lots of respondents spoke to an evolving sense of personhood, an improving ability to handle failure, a newfound ability to draw and maintain boundaries, a decrease in FOMO and an increase in comfortable independence.

When we asked students what they're looking forward to in the next year, they told us about travel plans, growing friendships and post-grad life.

In one of the most common responses, 140 students reported looking forward to going abroad, to places like Argentina, Uganda, Spain, Chile and France, while others mentioned excitement about returning from abroad themselves or seeing friends or partners who will come back from abroad soon.

Seventy-one students said they were looking forward to graduating — among them students excited to move to a new city, make new friends post-grad, start a job, start a graduate degree or just start a life after college. Others mentioned the approaching summer, opportunities to travel and new academic and research experiences.

Others mentioned the benefits of a world with fewer Covid-19 restrictions, with one person saying they're looking forward to how, "the in-person shows that got delayed are finally happening."

While some admitted that there isn't much they're looking forward to, other students talked about future opportunities for personal growth and the expansion of friendships, relationships and communities.

"To continue to grow as an individual and friend, and to explore new horizons intellectually, artistically, socially, and personally," one student wrote.

Native American tribes to no longer pay property taxes in Vermont

By SUSANNA SCHATZ
Contributing Writer

Governor Phil Scott recently signed legislation that exempts Vermont Native American tribes from property taxes. This comes as a relief to many tribe members, who say that their communities struggle with the financial burden of these taxes.

The new bill applies to the four officially recognized Vermont Native American tribes: Nulhegan Band of the Coosuk Abenaki Nation, Koasek Abenaki Tribe, Elnu Abenaki Tribe and the Missisquoi Abenaki Tribe.

"It really isn't going to collapse the state budget by giving us a hand up or to help uplift us and be able to use our tribal lands for the purposes that we always had," Don Stevens, chief of the Nulhegan band of the Coosuk Abenaki Nation, said in an interview with NBC5.

In a letter to legislators, Governor Phil Scott wrote, "I sign it out of respect for the heritage of our Native American communities and traditions." Scott also said in the letter the impact to the funds which the taxes contribute — such as the Education Fund and the General Fund — are forecasted to be negligible.

For Native tribes, paying taxes on land they believe was originally stolen could be a financial burden and something that reinforces the high rate of Native American poverty. Nationwide, according to a study conducted by sociologist Beth Redbird of Northwestern University, one in three Native Americans are living in poverty. The study says that while the poverty rate tends to generally be higher in rural parts of the U.S., the poverty gap between Native Americans living in urban and rural areas is higher than that of white people. This indicates that the higher poverty rate among Native Americans is not a result of their higher likelihood of living in rural areas but is indicative of other factors.

Native American people across the United States face income inequality and food insecurity, and tribes of Vermont are no exception to these struggles. In an effort to address the food insecurity many tribe members face, the Nulhegan band of the Coosuk-Abenaki Nation is raising bison as a reliable source of protein for food insecure Indigenous people. One goal of the bill is to mitigate these financial burdens on Indigenous communities.

"We need to be able to have food security and help with our health disparities and be able to regain some of those things that we've lost and I think this is a good partnership to do that," Stevens said in the NBC5 interview.

The bill specifies that the tribes utilizing the exemption may not lease any part of their land for profit. The tax exemption would currently apply to four Indigenous properties in the towns of Barton, Brattleboro, Swanton and Brunswick Springs.

Stevens said he hopes more tribes will acquire land in the future, increasing tribe sovereignty. "We're just continuing being part of that ancestral homelands and being able to use those lands the way our ancestors did; just to feed ourselves and to provide the necessary things that we need for our tribe," Stevens told NBC5.

Initiatives that financially assist Native tribes have been gaining traction across the U.S. Multiple areas, including San Francisco and Seattle, have programs that invite non-Native residents and businesses to pay a voluntary tax to the local Indigenous tribe as a means of support and an acknowledgement and show of gratitude for the ancestral Native land that they are hosted on. The goal is to restore Indigenous land and recover Indigenous stewardship.

"Justice for Native people is about confronting the privilege of settler colonialism," Dina Gilio-Whitaker, the policy director and senior research associate at the Center for World Indigenous Studies, said in a 2019 Guardian article. She prefers to frame discussions of this nature not around terms like 'reparations' or 'restitution,' but instead around the idea of decolonization.

Corrina Gould is the co-founder of the Sogorea Te' Land Trust, an intertribal, women-led organization in the San Francisco area working to restore Native lands. "I think there's starting to be a shift in the world," she told The Guardian. "People are really trying to understand how to try to fix some of the wrongs and the pain that has happened over the last few hundred years since America was created."

The new Vermont legislation states, "stewardship of these lands was removed from the Abenaki by European governments and settlers." The bill further acknowledges, "the Abenaki people as the traditional land caretakers of Ndakinna (En-DAH-kee-nah), which includes parts of Vermont, New England, and Quebec."

With this legislation, the state of Vermont takes a step toward the restoration of Native lands.

"We're place-based people, and we're gonna be here," Stevens said in the NBC5 interview.

The property tax exemption for Native American tribes in Vermont goes into effect July 1.

Parades return to Addison County after a two-year pandemic-induced hiatus

By BEN WAGNER
Staff Writer

The American Legions of Middlebury and Vergennes are each holding Memorial Day parades this year, and Bristol is planning a Fourth of July parade. The Middlebury parade will begin at 9 a.m., while the Vergennes parade will begin at 11 a.m. The timing is coordinated so that people are able to participate in both parades.

The American Legion is a Veterans Organization chartered by Congress in 1919. Its mission is "to enhance the well-being of America's veterans, their families, our military, and our communities by our devotion to mutual helpfulness." Generally, they do so by fighting for increased assistance for veterans, encouraging patriotic acts such as the preservation of memorials and parades, and assisting veterans in their transitions to civilization life.

The Vergennes parade has historically been the largest Memorial Day Parade in Vermont, according to The Addison County Independent. This year, its theme is "Home of the Free, because of the Brave," and it aims to appeal to both veterans and the broader community. The event will run over a 1.5 mile course.

The Vergennes Police Department does not allow candy to be thrown from moving floats due to safety concerns, but people can walk alongside floats and hand it out, according to the town of Vergennes website.

The Middlebury parade has historically had several marching bands, bagpipers, floats and marchers. The procession will begin behind the College's Mahaney Arts Center, and will finish with a more solemn ceremony at the Soldier's Monument on Merchants row.

While still festive, both the Middlebury and Vergennes parades have struck a fairly serious tone in remembrance of lost lives in previous years, according to The Addison Independent and WCAX. This year, though, the Vergennes parade will not have a formal remembrance.

The parades will be fairly open, with many people able to participate, open attendance and a dog-friendly policy.

For many, Memorial Day marks the unofficial start of summer. For Middlebury College students, the summer season will truly be kicking off, with residence halls closing on Wednesday, May 25, and Sunday, May 29, for non-seniors and graduating students, respectively.

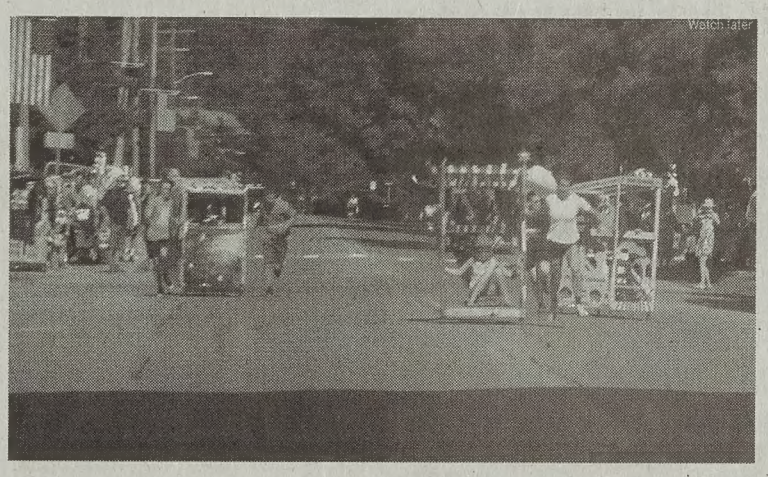
Bristol's Fourth of July parade, which will also include fireworks the night before and activities throughout the day, has a theme this year: "We're Back! Unmasked, and with the Best Parade Ever!," Ted Lylis, a parade committee member and former Republican representative to the Bristol Selectboard, told The Addison Independent. The Bristol parade claims to be the oldest running parade in Vermont.

The festivities revolve around floats made by community members, while the activities and booths rely on enthusiastic parade-goers and local vendors and businesses.

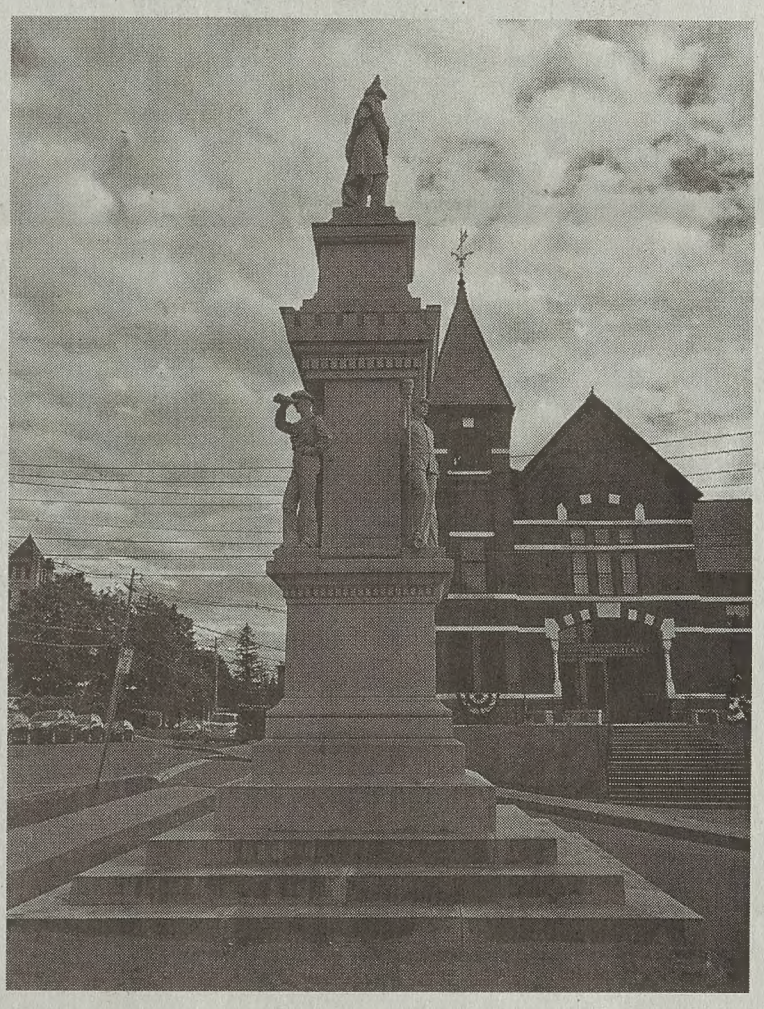
One of the day's trademark events is the Outhouse Race, where teams of two compete, pulling a third member sitting in an outhouse frame on wheels, along a roughly 500-foot course.

Typically there are four heats, a final and a prize for the best decorated outhouse. Parade-goers can bet on the heats and final by purchasing $1 tickets. One winner is picked from each heat to earn a $2 prize, while the winner chosen from winning bets in the final receives $75. The rest of the funds raised go to the next year's parade and Fourth of July celebration.

There is also a traditional 5K road race held in the early morning, for those looking to get a jump on the day's festivities.



Courtesy Photo
The 2018 outhouse race.



Courtesy Photo
The Middlebury Memorial Day parade will finish with a ceremony at the Soldier's Monument on Merchants row.

Courtesy Photo
Parade-goers participate in the 1980s outhouse race.

CHARLIE DEICHMAN-CASWELL/THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS
This International Workers Day, Milk with Dignity held protests at more than thirty Hannafords across the Northeast.

Milk With Dignity campaign pressures Hannaford on International Workers' Day

By CHARLIE DEICHMAN-CASWELL
Photo Editor

On Sunday, May 1 — on the holiday known as May Day and International Workers' Day — a large crowd gathered outside Hannaford supermarket in Middlebury to promote Milk with Dignity, a Migrant Justice program in support of migrant dairy workers. They held signs reading "The Cows Don't Milk Themselves" and "I Am An Essential Worker," alongside homemade signs in both English and Spanish. Chants of "Si se puede!" ("Yes we can!") rose in full voice from the assembly, which included farm workers, local Middlebury residents and Middlebury students.

"Our primary goal is to get Hannafords to join milk with dignity," protest organizer Rubinay said. "We want them to understand that many of the workers on their farms are treated unfairly and do not receive things like medical care and paid sick days." They said that they hope that urging Hannaford to join Milk with Dignity will bring better working conditions for farm workers. Rubinay asked to be identified only by their first name for safety reasons.

For years, activists have claimed that migrant dairy workers have been subjected to poor housing, dangerous work environments and racial discrimination. Many have their pay illegally withheld and are not given adequate food or rest. According to Migrant Justice, 40% of farmworkers are paid less than the Vermont minimum wage and have no days off. Among female employees, sexual abuse has become a major issue, while many undocumented workers would rather avoid contacting authorities than risk deportation.

Milk with Dignity, a program from Migrant Justice, began in 2009 after the tragic death of a young dairy worker named José Obeth Santiz Cruz. The program is dedicated to protecting migrant dairy workers and has partnered with corporations to render workers more visible and improve working conditions. Under Milk with Dignity, participating food industry leaders are enlisted to pay a premium for milk to their farmers, provided that the farmers agree to follow the Milk with Dignity code of conduct. This includes paying workers the Vermont minimum wage and providing them with dignified housing. In 2017, Milk with Dignity struck a deal with Ben and Jerry's, whose then-CEO Jostein Solheim called it "the definition of a win-win program" in an article from the Burlington Free Press.

Milk with Dignity has identified Hannaford supermarkets as the target of their current campaign. Hannaford is one of the largest supermarket chains in the Northeast and a major dairy vendor. On Sunday, supporters came forward, megaphones in hand, to lend their voices to the protest. Farm workers spoke about their own experiences and how Milk with Dignity has improved their workplaces. Local grocers stood by, shouting the occasional "thank you!" as they left the store.

At around noon, the protest leaders walked to the entrance of the supermarket. There, they met the branch manager and handed over a letter asking Hannaford to sign onto the Milk with Dignity program. The protesters then enjoyed a lunch of tamales and homemade hot cocoa before heading to a Hannaford in Burlington, where they would protest again.

This International Workers Day, Milk with Dignity held protests at more than thirty Hannafords across the Northeast, including in South Burlington, where hundreds of supporters marched a mile down a highway to a Hannaford location. Hannaford has not yet signed on to Milk With Dignity, but the Migrant Justice campaign continues.

CHARLIE DEICHMAN-CASWELL/THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Kick Start Grant Helps New Businesses to Success on Main Street, in Marble Works

By MAGGIE REYNOLDS
Local Editor

A grant aimed at bringing vibrant businesses to Main Street has re-opened for a second round of applications, which will close on May 13.

The Kick Start Middlebury Grant, sponsored principally by the Town of Middlebury and the Better Middlebury Partnership, awarded between $15,000 and $20,000 to six business proposals in mid-2021.

Per the rules of the grant, two of the six recipients were unable to fulfill their business plans within a set time frame, so they had to return the funds. Winners of the second round of the grant will receive the unallocated money from the first round.

For the second round of the grant, recipients' businesses must open by January 1, 2023.

According to Karen Duguay, executive director of the Better Middlebury Partnership, the idea for the Kick Start Grant came from a similar business plan contest in Wilmington, Vermont. Duguay pitched the concept in summer 2020 as a means of offering businesses an incentive to come into the vacant storefronts on Main Street.

"[The grant] encouraged businesses to come into these empty storefronts at a time that was really uncertain," Duguay told The Campus.

The first round of grant applications generated 40 letters of interest, which the committee narrowed down to 12 applicants, who presented full business plans. Six businesses ultimately received the funds.

The Better Middlebury Partnership collected a total of $120,000 in funding to award to winners of the grant. That money included $50,000 from the town of Middlebury business development fund, $50,000 from a nonprofit grant provider called Table 21, $10,000 from the Rotary Club of Middlebury and $10,000 from the Sassano Donor Advised Fund.

Applications are reviewed by a panel of eight committee members, one of whom is a Middlebury College student. "We try to create a diverse panel that [feels] representative of the entire community, and not just one person," Duguay added.

The business proposals are evaluated on criteria such as the quality of the business plan, the quality of the financial projections, social diversity, job creation and location, according to the Kick Start Middlebury website.

One recipient of the first round of grant money was the Middlebury Studio School, a nonprofit that provides arts and crafts education for people of all ages.

The Studio School has had a location on Route 7 since 2016, but the Kick Start funds allowed it to expand to a second location in Marble Works. The Marble Works location opened in November of 2021.

According to Sarah Briggs, executive director of the Studio School, the Route 7 location is primarily a pottery studio, while the Marble Works spot has been able to provide a wider variety of classes in oil painting, pastel and watercolor.

The business applied for the grant out of an interest in having a downtown presence that is walkable from both Main Street and the college, Briggs told The Campus.

"The grant really helped us be able to establish the space and then add classes over time," she said.

Another recipient of the grant money, Helen Hall, applied with a proposal to open a new version of a long-beloved Middlebury business called Calvi's.

The original Calvi's was a 1920s-style soda fountain shop that served crepes and diner food, according to Hall. The shop was open from 1902 until 1998, when the owner at the time, Blaney Calvi Blodgett, passed away.

Hall said she came up with the idea of re-opening Calvi's about a year ago, and the possibility of a grant to help fund the project moved things along.

"Middlebury needs more anchor businesses that can benefit [people] not just with food, but also [as] a really fun place to hang out," Hall told The Campus.

She originally hoped to purchase a unit in Marble Works, but questions of budgets and finding employees led her to change course. Instead, she is now planning to begin with an ice cream stand located on Main Street near Frog Hollow Bikes, which she might expand to a larger store over time.

"It is less risky. There are more chances of having a successful business and not risk wasting the grant money," Hall said.

Hall said her current goal is to open the stand in June. She envisions Calvi's as a spot where college students, high school students, adults and families alike will flock for ice cream or a crepe over the summer.

Other winners of the grant's first round of funding include Sparrow Art Supply, a shop for arts and crafts and creative needs, and Your Home Too, the second location of a vintage shop in Bristol.

Addison West, a home decor store, received funding to expand to a bigger storefront on Main Street. Complications with purchasing the space led owners to buy a building in Waitsfield instead, so they had to return the grant money. Middlebury Rock Bouldering Center ran into similar issues in finding a building that met its needs for ceiling height and other safety requirements, so their funding was also returned

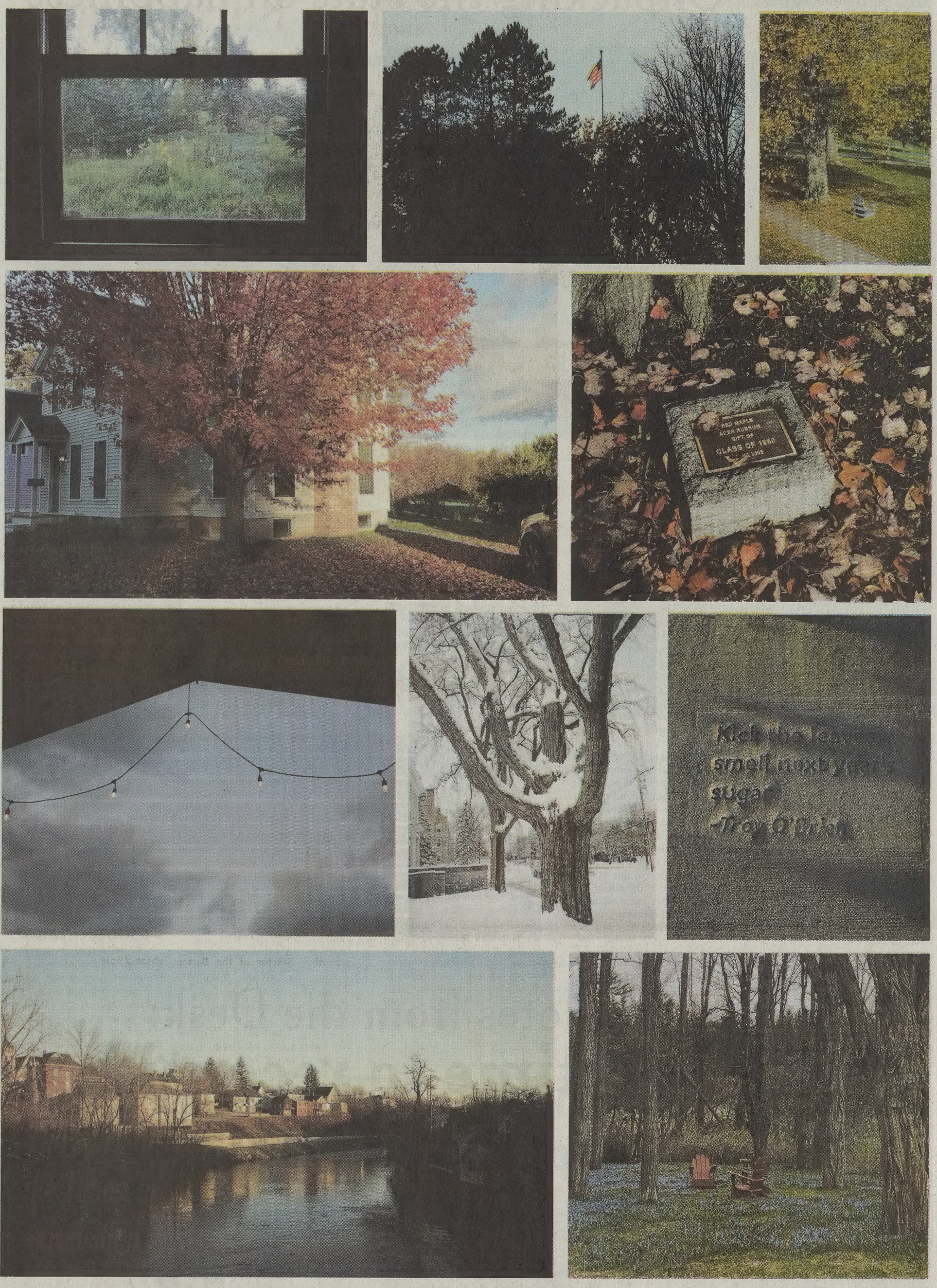
> "People have great concepts and a lot of energy around this."

The second round of grants has already received five applications, Duguay said, and she anticipates a couple more coming in before the May 13 deadline. Winners will be expected to move into their space within six months.

"People have great concepts and a lot of energy around this," Duguay said.

More information about the Kick Start Middlebury grant, including the grant application can be found at https://www.kickstartmiddlebury.com.

Photos from the Desk: Midd in four seasons



Florence Wu/The Middlebury Campus

Want to work for The Campus?

The Campus is hiring editors across sections for fall 2022. Read each of the descriptions to learn how to apply.

News Editors assign and edit articles every week for the news section. To apply, please send a statement of interest (1-2 paragraphs) and a writing sample (1-2 pages) to Senior News Editor Brinlea La Barge (blabarge@middlebury.edu).

Local Editors brainstorm and assign articles about what goes on in the town of Middlebury (and around Vermont!), correspond with writers, and edit the finished pieces to be published in our weekly newspaper. To apply, please send a statement of interest (1-2 paragraphs) and a writing sample (most likely, an article you've written for The Campus) to Senior Local Editor Becca Amen (ramen@middlebury.edu).

Arts & Culture Editors solicit weekly articles from writers to be submitted on Sunday. Editors are responsible for helping communicate with writers and edit their articles by Monday night. Editors also meet with writers on Monday nights to communicate feedback and discuss edits. To apply, please send a statement of interest (1-2 paragraphs) as well as a writing sample (if not currently a writer for The Campus) to Senior Editor Owen Mason-Hill (omasonhill@middlebury.edu).

Sports Editors edit articles for the sports section of our weekly publication and come up with story ideas about Middlebury teams/athletes/alumni. Experience with editing or journalistic writing is helpful but not required. If interested in applying, please email a brief statement of interest (1-2 paragraphs) to incoming Senior Sports Editor Charles Crounse (ccrounse@middlebury.edu).

Opinions Editors participate in Editorial Board discussions, help draft the weekly editorial on behalf of the Editorial Board, and solicit and edit op-eds from the Middlebury community. To apply, please send a statement of interest (1-2 paragraphs) to Daleelah Saleh (dsaleh@middlebury.edu).

Online Editors will publish articles, videos, advertisements, and other media to our website, with an eye for accuracy and stylistic consistency. Online Editors will also get to influence the appearance and operation of our website, with the opportunity to advance into the Digital Director position in the future. Experience with WordPress or similar platforms is helpful but not required. Interested applicants should email a brief statement of interest to Emmanuel Tamrat (etamrat@middlebury.edu).

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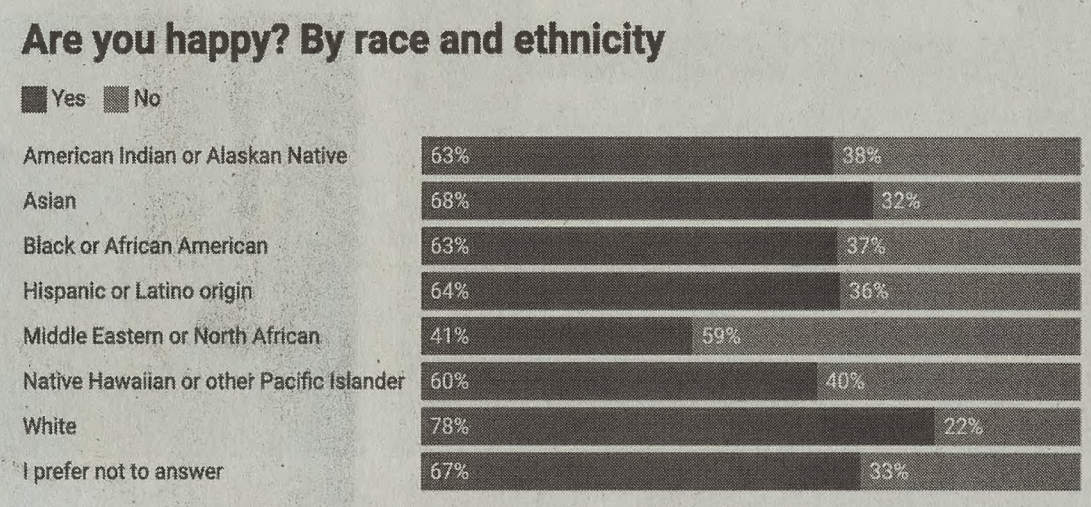
The Middlebury Campus

Unpacking the stats on happiness

Editorial

The editorial represents the opinion of the Middlebury Campus Editorial Board.



Respondents could select all identities that applied.

Around the midway point of the 2022 Zeitgeist survey, our 1,134 respondents encountered a rather blunt question: "Are you happy?", with only "yes" or "no" answer options. While we acknowledge how this binary greatly oversimplifies this inquiry, we were curious as to how Middlebury students would opt to characterize their happiness when confronted with only two choices.

In the end, 75% of students who took our survey answered yes, and 25% answered no. We as a board are hesitant to label this as a "good" metric — though these numbers make us seem like a relatively content student body, they also suggest one in four students in any given room are "unhappy."

The distribution of these feelings is not even across all demographics. Respondents that said they are white —with a 78% "yes" rate — were at least 10 percentage points happier than students that selected any other racial or ethnic identity.

Students on financial aid also cited lower happiness numbers, with 69% of respondents answering "yes" compared to 80% of student respondents not receiving financial aid. This brings up questions about whose well-being at Middlebury is valued and supported and who has a more straightforward path to feeling as though they belong here.

While one's personal happiness is incredibly intimate and often invisible, it is also apparent through this data how privilege and access can play a role in how members of our community define how they're feeling. Although we often think of college as a place where everyone comes to build their own social and support networks from scratch, this playing field is rarely level. Ultimately, we must consider who has a relatively easy time finding happiness here and who has to consistently fight for it.

Our data also shows that there is a slight general upward trend from students' first years to final semesters. (It gets better)! It's possible that the longer students are at Middlebury, the more comfortable and satisfied they feel as access to opportunities increases and social groups are strengthened.

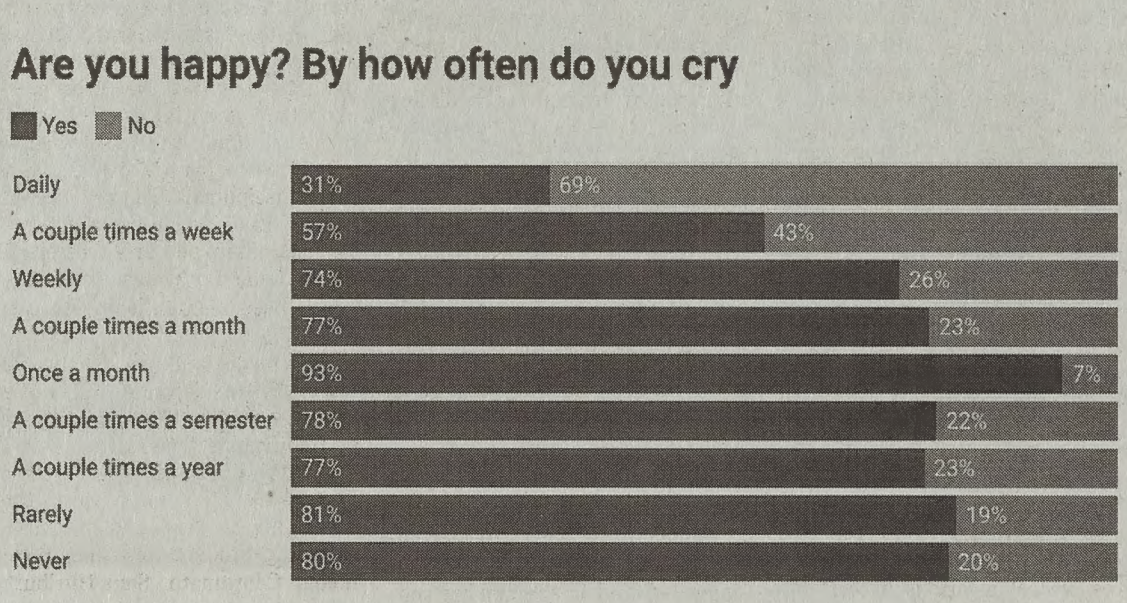
We can also consider that many of the "yes" answers are relative — students may be more likely to state they are happy in comparison to the last two years. Even if students are having a hard time now, they may still reflect on their current feelings positively compared to the height of the Covid-19 pandemic. Being happier than you were "before" may or may not correlate with authentic and palpable happiness.

However, students in their written answers — included as part of the wrap-up portion of the survey — generally appear to feel more settled and confident. Multiple respondents note that their mental health has improved, while others express newfound feelings of patience, satisfaction, independence and gratitude. "I feel like I've become comfortable with who I am in a way I haven't really experienced before" one student writes. Another notes that they are "focusing on myself and making decisions that are in the interest of my own happiness."

> Ultimately, we must consider who has a relatively easy time finding happiness here and who has to consistently fight for it.

Nevertheless, it is clear that these feelings of increased happiness and self-assurance are not evenly experienced. If there's anything we can take away from this question and its results, it's evident how happiness, or lack thereof, is intertwined with pre-existing inequities.

We definitely don't claim to have answers to happiness, nor have we tried to find them. But, we do have one data point that might provide one: 93% of respondents who reported crying once a month — a more resounding percentage than found in any other category — said that they were happy. Perhaps a once-a-month cry is a healthy outlet after all.



Notes from the Desk: Is it time to reconsider our mascot?

Notes from the desk

Charlie Keohane '24 is an Editor at Large for The Middlebury Campus

While I love the iconic panther statue and #rollpants as much as the next Midd Kid, I can't help but wonder why a school in rural Vermont has a black panther, which has never roamed the area, for a mascot. We're among 33 colleges with this mascot, and the panther is the fourth most popular college mascot, following the bulldog, the tiger and the eagle. Surely, we can come up with a mascot that is more unique to Middlebury and better suits the character of the college.

First, a brief history lesson about how the panther mascot came about: in 1922, a local merchant named Fay Evans sponsored a naming contest to pick an appropriate mascot for the college. Most responses were for felines like bobcats, lynxes, catamounts or semi-aquatic animals like otters or beavers. The judges, consisting of President Paul Moody, football coach Arthur Brown and Campus editor Eddy Kalin, class of 1923, selected none of those and opted for the black panther. This arbitrary decision was not grounded in a widespread consensus and bore no connection to the region. So, is it time for a change?

In 2012, Damon Hatheway '13.5 wrote an op-ed, "A Call for a New Mascot," and opined that Middlebury should match the individuality and creativity of the other NESCACs. Compared to the Tufts Jumbos and the Connecticut College Camels (and I hate to say it, but the Williams Ephs, manifested as a purple cow), the panther falls flat. Hatheway suggested that we rebrand as the Middlebury moose, a powerful animal that roams Vermont forests.

While I'm also suggesting that we consider a new mascot, I don't think the moose is the path forward. Instead, I believe that we have a potential new mascot hanging out in the local creek: the otter. Not only does the Middlebury Otters have a nice ring to it, I also think it's more creative and better represents the character of Middlebury.

River otters, like the kind found in nearby Otter Creek, strike a careful balance between being cute and playful but also ferocious in their own right. Otters are very intelligent and construct elaborate burrows to live in. Like many students on campus, they're nocturnal animals. According to the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department, they have a curious nature and will sometimes slide along the river banks into the water for pleasure.

But, otters are also strong and athletic creatures. They are remarkable swimmers and divers, and they are fierce hunters. They're carnivorous and can hunt in deep and shallow water, catching fish and other small animals. Historically, they've been hunted for their thick, valuable fur. However, thanks to protective regulations, their population numbers have been increasing.

Also, unlike the more solitary panther, otters are often spotted with each other and have small social circles. A group of otters on land is known as a romp. In the water, they're known as a raft.

As a bonus, otters are bicoastal and could potentially be a tie to the Monterey Institute in California, an area also famously home to otters (albeit a different type).

This is all to say otters would make a more fitting and creative Middlebury mascot. While the panther certainly has its merits, it's one of the most generic college mascots. The otter is both a ferocious predator and — unlike Williams' purple cows — exists in real life. It's also unique enough to capture the character of a small college in Vermont. An otter mascot would further our connection to the local community and maintain the strength and creativity of the college. I can already imagine a giant bronze statue of a river otter overlooking the stadium, and t-shirts saying stay four otters apart.

SABRINA TEMPLETON

Nocturne Arts Festival 2022: A Campus Transformed

By OLIVIA PINTAIR
Contributing Writer

On one spring night a year, when night falls over Middlebury, the campus transforms. Scintillating lights pull eyes upward, calling gazes off their typical treadmill tracks. Painter Hall morphs into a movie screen, masked dancers emerge to slither across sheets on the Chapel steps, dragons hang from the underbellies of sloping trees and swarms of glittered faces draw you into the hum. This is Nocturne, the college's annual all-night arts festival.

This past weekend marked the fourth festival in five years, with 2020's Nocturne canceled due to Covid-19. Featuring over 175 student artists — the most in its history — Nocturne sprawled across campus, drawing hundreds of students to revel in each other's creative offerings, oddities and glitz.

The morning of the event, Nocturne President Maia Sauer '22 sipped coffee in a Proc booth across from me, both of us reeling with excitement for nightfall. As we spoke, she marveled at the singularity of the annual event. "[It brings] so many people together for the purpose of lifting each other's creative voices," Sauer said. "[Nocturne provides] this beautiful cumulative demonstration of what people can do on this campus in their own way."

As the festival began, I sped through campus on a bike with glowing wheels, content to blend in to the spectacle. I passed crowds of people grooving to DJ sets outside McCullough, heading towards a crocheted universe called "Tangled," a pool-less "Pool Party" and an appropriately-named installation called "Lumps." Other projects this year included a fly-tying workshop, a series of paintings called "Life in Cat Memes" and the highly-anticipated midnight event.

One student, Chad Kim '23.5, created a life-size papier-mache cast of himself, suspended from a tree with the help of the college's Landscape Horticulturist Tim Parsons. "'Universal Beans'... was inspired by an event that sent me into an existential spiral when I fell from this tree on Davis lawn," Kim said. "I wanted to pay homage to the many Chad-lives I've lost in various places."

Another student, Shane Silverman '24.5, genetically modified E. coli bacteria to glow. "I wanted to take nature as the medium for art itself," Silverman said. Silverman, surprisingly, is not a biology major.

Nocturne offers students a chance to surprise each other and ourselves — to blend the creative with the academic, the diligently-practiced with the entirely new. "Nocturne is a space to expand on [classroom conversations]. There's some shenanigans and also some real-world stuff, which is cool," Nocturne Treasurer Alexis Welch '22.5 said.

For many students, Nocturne provides a much-needed break from the rigidity of academic life. As Molly Babbin '23 told me, "It's like a collective sigh of relief."

Many students I spoke with saw Nocturne as a stage for social commentary. "Art is always...inherently political," Adelaide Mahler '23 said. "Nocturne [is] the perfect opportunity to utilize the arts in their inherent capacity for societal critique and reflection."

Mahler and other members of the college's Milk With Dignity collective displayed their work advocating for migrant justice and human rights for farm workers. Another student, Frankie Shiner '23, shared a short film and accompanying zine that they hoped would help people reckon with ableism.

"[Nocturne] encourages thinking more curiously and expansively about what effort and research look like," Sauer said. "As students, we think really hard all the time, sometimes to a fault and sometimes too narrowly. I think the one night, chaotic, communal, collaborative environment of Nocturne... is fun, but also pushes people to see themselves as creatively capable."

This was the case for Kai Velasquez '23, for whom sharing art at Nocturne was a first. Their piece, "Queer Joy," was composed of a series of photographs, showcasing their friends — mostly queer people of color — and an accompanying zine.

On the blustery terrace of Axinn before the festival began, I made tape-loops while they installed their prints on the windows. "Speaking transparently, I feel like there was just immense loss last year," they told me. "I feel like that loss really got to people in how they moved on campus." For Velasquez, displaying their photographs was an effort to connect — to share a meditation on joy after a grueling year.

But this is not an easy or uncomplicated task. "I'm still afraid," Velasquez shared in the sinking sunlight. "I started wondering, "What if drunk people come by and tear them down?" especially with what's been happening." Amid insidious racial violence on campus — not to mention the hate crime committed last week — these fears are founded and grave. The stakes involved in sharing art publicly can be vastly different for each of us.

Emmanuel Tamrat/The Middlebury Campus

This past weekend marked the fourth festival in five years — with 2020's Nocturne canceled due to Covid-19. Featuring over 175 student artists — the most in its history — Nocturne sprawled across campus, drawing hundreds of students to revel in each other's creative offerings, oddities and glitz.

Yet, Velasquez diligently offers their work in a spirit of humility, grace and a quiet, admirable confidence. "I know my friends are gonna be excited to see this. I'm hoping when people come they can be respectful and sort of honor the love that's here."

The legacy of Nocturne as a site of radical community-building was inherent in its founding. "[Nocturne] was started in the very particular moment after Charles Murray and the Trump election," founding organizer and past Nocturne president Sam Kann '21 said. "A lot of the people doing art were the people who protested, the people who were being disciplined." The festival was born as a call for campus community, generativity and arts-accessibility in a moment fraying at the seams.

It's been teeming with life ever since.

"Nocturne is funky. That's the best way to describe it," Tanya Chen '24.5 said. There is an air of unpredictability, of curiosity, of stumbling-across-ness. Yet, behind the mystery are hours of work contributed by students and staff alike, including Student Activities Technology Coordinator Sam Hurlburt, affectionately referred to by organizers as "Nocturne MVP." "[Nocturne] involves a lot of different people who make this campus function smoothly on a day-to-day basis," Sauer said.

Overworked as they may be, all of the organizers glowed when they spoke of the process. At the opening event, as Marina Prikis's '25 cover of Olivia Rodrigo's "Jealousy" tugged our attention, I spoke with the incoming Nocturne president and current organizer Patricia Hughes '24. "I joined for the vibes. And because there's a sense of magic to it. I wanted to contribute to creating that," Hughes said.

"Nocturne feels like a living, breathing thing," Sauer said. "[It] can evolve based on what students want and need." As I stood within the pulsing crowd at the midnight event, I watched a sense of delight spread across faces like a breeze, and felt that this was true.

Editor's Note: If you'd like to become a Nocturne organizer, please send an email to nocturne@middlebury.edu.

Cliff Hanger: The Outbound Collective films a modern outdoors

By MAGGIE BRYAN
Contributing Writer

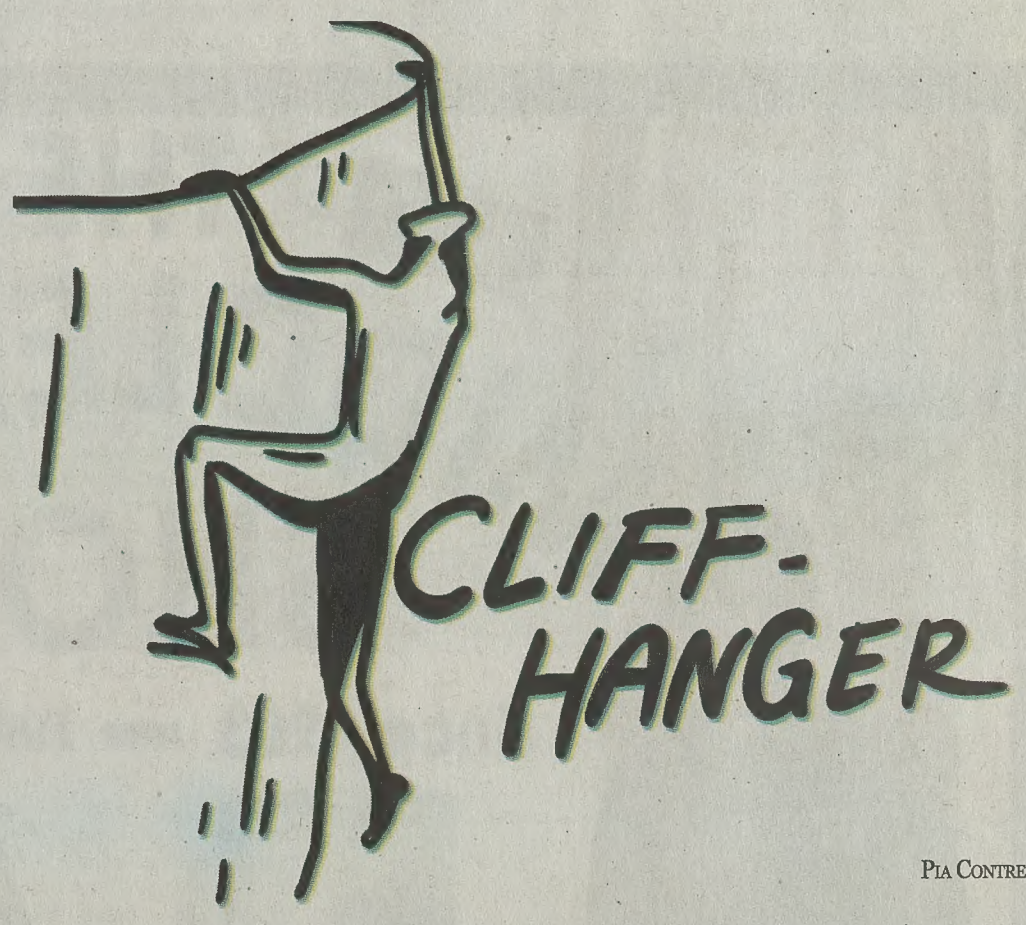
The most successful outdoor films tend to focus on the "firsts" of the outdoor world: first ascents, remarkable survivals, free solos. This genre is dominated by white men, reflecting how the individual experiences of traditionally marginalized groups in outdoor spaces are often overlooked. The accomplishments of these marginalized groups are often overshadowed by films with million-dollar budgets that focus on the names and places that audiences already know. In reality, the ability of ordinary people to thrive in outdoor spaces is just as remarkable. Public lands are one of the few places in our world that are, in theory, "free." Yet for millions of Americans, the barriers to entry into the outdoors are still extremely high.

Launched in 2013, The Outbound Collective is a community of diverse nature lovers that believe in creating a "modern outdoors." "The concept of being colorblind to us just doesn't resonate. We want to live in full color, you know, we want fully saturated lives," said Outbound Collective Co-Founder and CEO Brian Heifferon of the company's ideology.

The Collective's articles and films reflect that saturation. Their website features articles titled everything from, "Pronouns Matter, Especially in the Outdoors" to "Review: Outdoor Research Shadow Insulated Hoodie." In 2020, The Outbound Collective partnered with HOKA ONE ONE to produce a series of seven short films in a campaign called #EveryoneOutside. The films range from two to 15 minutes in length, and each highlights the story of a diverse leader of an outdoor organization. The films don't have high budgets, celebrity casts or action-packed plots — characteristics that are typically the keys to success in the outdoor film market. All are available to watch for free on YouTube, where they average only a few thousand views. Yet their themes are just as — if not more — relevant as their more widely-consumed competitors.

By telling individual stories within the greater context of the outdoors community, each short film sheds light on the intersection between personal and generational trauma. As individuals describe their struggles, the camera shows breathtaking views and overlays orchestral music. The effect is a reminder of the sense of welcome that nature provides, regardless of outside distractions. As interviewees recount past traumas, the films show them in action: hiking, fly fishing and climbing, doing what they love, rather than just showing a standard well-framed headshot. "Even when I was just clinically depressed, I didn't know what to do and there wasn't just this ready available answer. I went out and fished for a little bit, and I didn't find an answer, but I got to be out in nature and fish," Jahmicah Dawes said in her interview with The Outbound collective. Dawes is the first Black owner of an outdoor gear store in the United States. Using action as a mode of healing is perhaps also a metaphor for how audiences should cope with and progress on social injustices.

Despite their individual focus, each film connects its story to a larger intersectional theme. The films convey this larger focus by explicitly mentioning issues like climate change, but also by interweaving landscape shots and descriptions of nature. Often, the camera shows landscapes in the background of the individual being interviewed. Closeups of fly-tying and a river, for example, intersect these landscapes. When outdoors, it's easy to be baffled by the scale of life itself. Similarly, the scale and multitude of struggles that can exist for traditionally marginalized peoples in the outdoors are seemingly infinite. For example, runner Lesford Duncan still grapples with his mother's absence during his childhood while also experiencing the nationwide fear instilled by stories like that of Ahmaud Arbery and George Floyd. "I just looked out over San Diego to kind of ground myself and get perspective. And what I saw was that powerful healing effect and resilience building effect of being in the outdoors in my life, and helping me overcome a lot of the adversity that I had experienced in my childhood," he said in an interview with The Outbound Collective.



Pia Contreras

It would be easy to create short films that document the struggles of marginalized people in the outdoors, but depicting their joy is more empowering. A shot of a woman laughing as a fish splashes her in the face, and one where an ecologist cries tears of joy after witnessing someone see their first grizzly bear, are extremely valuable. Scenes flash from laughter to gorgeous views, once again reminding audiences of the ability of nature to catalyze happiness. Interweaving moments of joy with intense sadness heightens the audience's perception of the strength required to thrive in those spaces, and the beauty that comes with it.

Women's track & field wins third NESCAC title, first in 22 years

Courtesy of Josh Mckee

The Panthers celebrate their third NESCAC title in Clinton, New York, on Saturday, April 30.

By LEXI LINAFELTER
Staff Writer

Blue hair, hoarse voices, broken records and a conference championship title — following the NESCAC Championship meet last weekend, women's track & field has a lot to celebrate. Driven by four first-place and two second-place finishes, the Panthers scored 149 points, earning their first league title since 2000.

When asked to describe the emotion of the weekend in one word, athlete Ashley Raynor '24 did not hesitate before posing a follow-up question: "What's a word meaning stronger than excitement?"

A magical combination of team spirit and shattered team records hurled the Panthers to the top. In perhaps the most important individual performance of the day, Cassie Kearney '22 won both the 800-meter (2:09.51) and 1500-meter (4:26.64), tallying personal bests and NESCAC Championship meet records in both races. Kearny will advance to the Division III New England Finals this weekend.

In the 4x800-meter relay, Kearny, Emily Bulzynski '22, Winnie Wang '24, and Audrey Grimes '23, pulled off a win with a time of 9:17.10.

Ciara Dale '24 also set a personal record in the 400-meter hurdles (1:03.27), finishing second. Also snagging a runner-up position and a personal best was Kate Kenny '23, shaving 5.55 seconds off of her collegiate-best time in the 3000-meter steeplechase (10:51.61).

In the 4x100-meter, Joely Virzi '24, Michelle Louie '24, Eva Kaiden '23, and Cady Barns '22 took third in 48.53 seconds, beating their own school record. The 4x400-meter team of Louie, Dale, Elle Thompson '25 and Nicole Johnson '22 also finished third in 3:56.13.

The runners on the women's team showed no mercy, but the team's well-rounded performance in the field events was a key factor in their push for a trophy. In her first year of postseason competition, Jaxon Palmer '25 pulled off a critical victory, throwing down a 114'4" finish in the javelin. In the shot put, Mary Scott Robinson '24 landed second place, throwing for a distance of 37'11.5".

Meanwhile, after a long, hard fought day of competition, the men's team landed in third place. The Panthers scored 91.5 points, falling behind first-place Tufts (177.5) and second-place Williams (164).

Max Cluss '23 tallied a second place finish in the 1500-meter (3:51.60), while Peter Hansen '23 and Zander Kessler '22.5 both placed third (400-meter hurdles and the 5000-meter, respectively). In the 4x400-meter relay, Hansen, Xander Swann '25, Colin Breen '24 and Finn Warner '24 also finished third (3:23.12).

Dave Filias '25 also smashed his personal record by nearly seven feet in the hammer throw (156'3"). Also setting a new PR, Sam McGarrahan '25 found his stride to put up a career-best of 6'2.75" in the high jump.

"To have the kind of support system that we have, when the men's team is this supportive of the women's team, and the women's team so supportive of the men's team is so unique," Raynor added.

Up next, qualifying athletes will head to Williams on Friday and Saturday for the Division III New England Championships.

Football team to host Be The Match Registry Drive on May 5

Courtesy of Middlebury Athletic Communications

Over 160 football and sports teams from colleges and universities across the nation are participating in the Be The Match program this year.

By BLAISE SIEFER
Senior Sports Editor

Be The Match is an organization that connects patients with a donor match for a life-saving marrow or umbilical cord blood transport. On Thursday, May 5, the Middlebury football team is running a Be The Match Registry Drive, recruiting potential marrow donors. The event will occur from noon to 6 p.m. in the white tent outside of McCullough.

"You have the ability to save someone's life directly and it's an easy procedure," Cole Brown '22.5 told The Campus. "It goes a long way."

To join the registry, participants must give a swab of the cheek cells, meet age and health requirements and complete a health history form. Individuals can also help the cure by becoming a volunteer or financial contributor.

This is the first year the football team is hosting a Be The Match Registry Drive. So far, the team has already completed a lot of internal swabbing as a first step to help the 12,000 or more patients each year who don't have a matching marrow donor within their family.

Those who can't make the event in-person can join the registry by completing a swab kit at another time. Registrations for this procedure can be completed at my.bethematch.org/MiddleburySaves.

SEVEN QUESTIONS WITH ANNA KROUSE '25.5, WOMEN'S TRACK & FIELD

By OWEN PARK
Staff Writer

Anna Krouse '25.5 from Cleveland, Ohio, is running in her first season on the women's track & field team. In this installment of "Seven Questions," Krouse discusses her journey to collegiate athletics, training during her semester off and her goal to try every single event in existence.

Owen Park: *Growing up, was track your main sport?*

Anna Krouse: Not at first. Sports have always been a big part of my life, and I tried a lot of different ones when I was younger. I started off swimming but stopped during my sophomore year to focus on climbing and running track and cross country. I really love the environment of being on a track team. Competing with a lot of amazing friends and coaches that cared about me while pushing me to be my best self inspired me to devote more of my time to track. But at the end of the day, I just love running in general.

OP: *What inspired you to run track in college?*

AK: At first, I didn't think I would be running in college. I was accepted to Midd as a Feb and was planning on my senior season being my last. However, I set several personal records that spring, making it my best season by far. Achieving all of these milestones made me realize that I wanted to keep running and to continue being a member of a community that had always been an important part of my life. So later that season, I told my coach that I wished I was running in college, and he encouraged me to send my times and videos to Middlebury.

OP: *Is there a person or mentor that has been an integral part of your journey to collegiate athletics?*

AK: Dave Englander, my track and cross country coach. Regardless of how fast or slow you were, he always made you feel like you were part of the team. He gave every runner individualized workouts so that they could improve. He could be really intense at times, but his coaching style pushed me to become more excited about running and to get the most out of every practice. I remember his support really coming through during my senior year at state championship qualifiers. That year, I was a member of a 4x800-meter relay team that finished just outside of qualifying for a wildcard spot. It was my last year so I was bummed that I wouldn't be able to compete in states, but Coach Englander was really happy with how we did since it was a [personal record] for the team. I still keep in touch with him sometimes, and he was very supportive when I said I would be running the 400[-meter] hurdles at NESCACs.

OP: *As a Feb, how did your semester off affect your transition to collegiate athletics?*

AK: I spent some of my time doing workouts, but I spent most of my time climbing. Running and climbing complement each other really well — each works different parts of your body which helps a lot with staying in shape. I split my time climbing between New River Gorge in West Virginia, Red River Gorge in Kentucky and the Peloponnese in Greece with some friends. Climbing in Greece was probably my favorite part of the trip — all of the climbs and trails were new and the scenery was like nothing I've seen before. Being active during my semester off really helped the transition back into track. During my first few practices at Midd, I felt slightly rusty but it was really easy to get back into form.

Courtesy of Brian Spaeth Brian Spaeth

Anna Krouse '25.5 streaks through an 800m at Shaker Heights High School in Shaker Heights, Ohio.

OP: *Do you have any rituals that help you get prepared for a meet?*

AK: Listening to my pump-up songs. My go-to's are "Transportin'" by Kodak Black, "Bianá" by Babermat, and just about anything Kid Cudi. "Cudi Zone" has been a staple of mine since high school. On the physical side, I'll do block starts and longer warmups an hour before my event, just to get my blood flowing. I don't know if it helps, but I also eat packs of Welch's fruit snacks before every meet.

OP: *What is the most difficult part of running sprints?*

AK: Just running can be pretty difficult. The workouts are challenging but having the support of your teammates makes them easier. Transitioning back into a competitive atmosphere was tough as well. At the start of the season, going to big meets was physically and mentally challenging after being out of it for so long. Right now, I'm learning how to hurdle, which is really fun but not easy, especially with all the times that I've banged my knee. Event-wise, the 400 hurdles is one of the most difficult events to run, especially during the second curve when I can't see the finish line and the fatigue's setting in. I always have to remind myself that I'm almost done so when I reach the last 100 meters, I get an extra 'kick' and finish strong.

OP: *In terms of track, is there anything you're looking forward to in the future?*

AK: A lot of things! I'm really looking forward to the winter track season since I didn't get to participate in it this year. I'm also excited to compete in more hurdling events and am considering continuing with them next year. But if I could do anything at all, I would want to participate in a heptathlon — 100-meter hurdles, a 200-meter, an 800-meter, a high jump, a long jump, a shot put and a javelin throw — or a steeplechase. Neither are super realistic, but it would be so much fun to try every single event that's out there.

Jordan Saint-Louis '24 gives a look behind the lens filming Midd Varsity Games

By RYAN HEINZERLING
Contributing Writer

Playing a college sport is difficult, but for Jordan Saint-Louis '24, filming them presents its own challenges. This spring, Saint-Louis teamed up with Middlebury Athletic Communications to film select varsity games. So far, he's made six short films.

"[The games are] all moving really fast," Saint-Louis told The Campus. "When I'm playing, I don't realize how hard it is to capture people moving. Usually the videos I [make] are not sports videos for that reason. It's hard to capture people moving, especially something like hockey."

A film major and member of the men's soccer team, Saint-Louis got into filming after starting a clothing and multimedia company with his friends back home in Potomac, Maryland. Last May, he received a MiddChallenge grant to buy a camera and gear to start learning how to film.

"He really has an eye for video production and he loves sports," Ali Paquette, Assistant Director of Athletic Communications, said. "What I personally love is watching Jordan in action at competitions and then seeing the final product. Having a behind the scenes look is a rare opportunity."

In addition to faculty support, teams have also rallied behind Saint-Louis's films — often reposting them on social media. An athlete himself, Saint-Louis recognizes the impact of having a digital memento of games and practices.

"I [made a film] for women's basketball and I figured I might as well try and do them for as many teams as possible. None of the teams had any," Saint-Louis said.

Paquette noted that no matter the sport, Saint-Louis loves being in the thick of the action and possesses a special knowledge of each sport he films.

"It's something I'm planning on doing for the foreseeable future," Saint-Louis said. "Definitely something I would do after college. This is totally my thing."

Over the summer, Saint-Louis plans to travel to Africa to film young adult life, providing insight into a company that builds houses and develops real estate in Kenya and surrounding countries. He also plans to spend time in New York filming for a marketing and creative content production company.

Saint-Louis currently has an Instagram and website dedicated to showcasing his films.

Courtesy Photo

Jordan Saint Louis '24 is an avid filmmaker, planning on shooting films this summer.

Caroline Harding

PFL Weekly Ep. 10:

Women's track & field captures NESCAC title, men's tennis and baseball fly into postseason

By BLAISE SIEFER, ELI DIBARI, MARCO FENGLER, CAPTAIN RUDOLPH & CAROLINE HARDING

For the first time since 2000, Middlebury women's track & field is the NESCAC champion! This past Saturday, the Panthers captured the conference title in Clinton, New York, powered by three first-place finishes from senior distance runner Cassie Kearney. Back on campus, other varsity teams, such as men's tennis and baseball, are eagerly anticipating their postseasons, which begin this weekend. Catch this episode of PFL Weekly for a full run-down on what's ahead for Middlebury's varsity teams during championship season.

You can find the tenth episode of PFL Weekly on Spotify.

BEHIND THE CURTAIN AT THE MARQUIS THEATER

By EMILY HOGAN
Layout Editor

The Marquis Theater and Cafe in Middlebury exudes a small-town theater feel and has brought locals, college students and visiting tourists a wide array of movies, delicious food and a unique and pleasant atmosphere over the years.

A theater has stood at the location of 65 Main St. for about 100 years, and was converted to a movie theater around the 1950s. "So it's basically been a movie theater here for roughly 75 years," Ben Wells, owner of the Marquis, said. Wells, who has an extensive background in restaurants, bought the theater in 2014. Previously a stay-at-home dad and a rugby coach at Middlebury College, Wells felt he had done everything there was to do in the restaurant industry, and, as his children grew older, he believed the next step was working full-time at his own place. With a love for Mexican food and movies, he jumped at the opportunity to buy the Marquis.

"Not sure I thought it all the way through," Wells laughed.

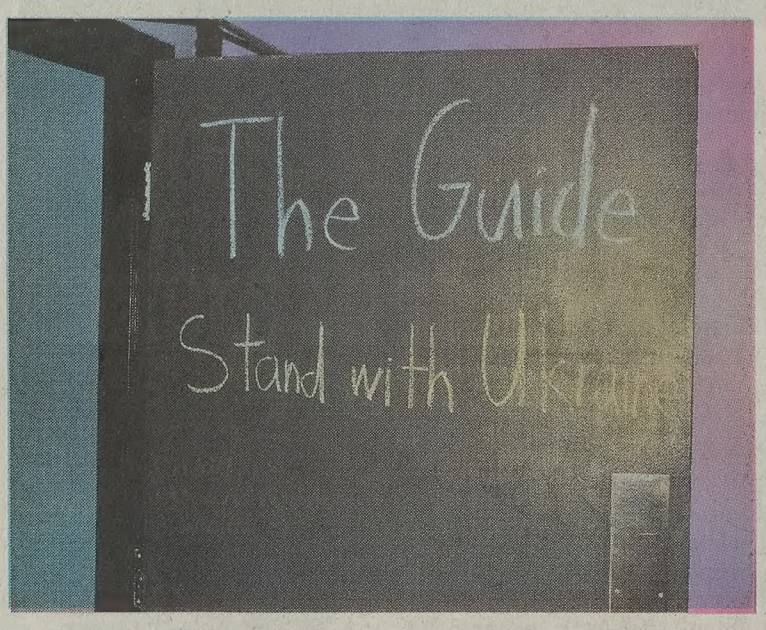
The name of the movie theater changed from The Campus Theater to The Marquis around the '90s, and it has grown from one screen to two screens to three screens. When Wells bought the theater, he renovated one theater to put in a bar and a cafe space, useful for trivia nights and parties.

The theater now has just two screens, each showing a different movie that transitions every week or two. Wells and Justin Arseneau, general manager of the Marquis, work with studios in Hollywood to decide which movies to show. These studios dictate that the Marquis have clean screen contracts, meaning Wells and Arseneau are only allowed to show one movie on a screen for its entire runtime. Premier weekends are often the busiest weekends, and most movies run for two weeks. In the midst of the pandemic, Spiderman: No Way Home ran for an unusually long six- or seven-week term.

The Marquis stands at 65 Main St., an ideal location for locals and college students.

Justin Arseneau is the General Manager at the Marquis.

The downstairs theater features unusual and unique seating, like sofas and couches, characteristic of a small-town theater.



As part of its "Wednesday One-off programming," the Marquis showed a Ukrainian film, "The Guide," and collected donations to give to a Ukrainian non-profit.

Wells mentioned that the pandemic constrained the amount of content being released, but Spiderman also proved a very popular movie for customers. "So we just kept it going," Wells said.

In addition to movie screenings, the theater contains a Mexican restaurant that has been established for the better part of a decade, a facet of the business which the staff feel makes the theater especially eccentric.

"Unique? It's a restaurant inside of a movie theater," Thomas Ahern, chef and manager at the Marquis, laughed.

It's not just the presence of a restaurant that makes the Marquis so distinct from others. Ahern emphasized the tight-knit staff relationships that have paved the way for flexibility from all members of the staff in making sure they have a say in the operations of the cinema. "There is a chain of command if you want to take it like that, but I have complete creative control over anything in the kitchen," Ahern said. Trust and confidence in the team is a product of Wells' initial goal for the theater. "We have an amazing staff of people who enjoy, I hope, cross-training and doing different stuff," he said.

In addition to the restaurant, the theater also hosts a number of events in the cafe. Most notably of these is Thursday Trivia, an exceptionally popular event for locals and college students alike. Wells mentioned that the theater is also trying to bring back its once-prevalent comedy shows as additional events.

The theater also hosts community benefit events, which they have titled "Wednesday one-offs." Aresenau and Wells have worked with groups such as Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) as well as Homeward Bound — the local animal shelter — and the Middlebury Community Music Center. Wells explained that the theater tries to pair a relevant film with a charitable organization and donate the theater space and admissions profits to that organization. The theater recently showed a film called "The Guide" while working with an organization called Stand With Ukraine, a nonprofit dedicated to helping Ukrainians amidst the violence against them. "The producers waive all distribution licensing fees and ... all theaters across the country are jumping on it," Wells said. A donation jar was set up for customers to give money to the organization before or after they watch the film.

Finally, the theater offers private rentals for birthday parties and other gatherings. With the use of digital projectors, families can rent out the space and show movies for young kids when the movies currently offered may not suit children. Wells mentioned that the theater saw a huge increase in private rentals with the pandemic, as families or close friends would often rent out the entire theater, at an affordable price, to still enjoy the theater experience without having to worry about being around a large group of people in a public space.

Running a theater in a small town allows for a community that would be nearly impossible to replicate in a city. "I've always viewed this place as not just a movie theater but a community center," Wells said. He hopes the theater is a space for locals to come and see others while sharing the common space. However, a small town theater comes with its challenges. Lack of population density is often the biggest obstacle for small businesses like the Marquis. But Wells added, "it's part of why those of us who choose to live here do so." And the small town theater certainly has a community feel to it. Trivia nights allow locals to come together and catch up, and college students to enjoy a night in town. There is certainly an appreciation by the staff of customer relationships.

"What I like about the job is definitely the people," Matthew Krause, a concessionist, projectionist and occasional bartender at the Marquis, said. Working at the theater since 2019, he has formed relationships with several customers who come in regularly. "They are always very nice and we have rapport with them," he said. Another aspect of the theater that the staff highlighted was its "homey" feel, which is certainly heightened by the sofas and couches at the front of the downstairs theater. Ahern added, "if it's not too busy, I come out and start talking to people at the bar or at the cafe and see how they're doing."

The theater, beloved by Middlebury residents, has not run without any challenges. These hardships were heightened with the onset of Covid-19. The theater was fully closed for a year, and the staff had to continuously keep up with the ever-changing landscape of the pandemic. "Reinventing the wheel is the best term I can think of because there were so many different obstacles and factors that we just never had to deal with before," Arseneau said. Wells explained that the theater consistently kept up to date on the CDC and the Vermont Department of Health's guidelines, though the lack of clear guidance proved difficult. "Businesses were often left alone to make the decisions," Wells said, regarding what was permissible and non-permissible to do in the theater. The Marquis opened in phases, with mask usage for the community and events generally following the flow of the pandemic. Once private rentals were offered, the theater then opened up its restaurant for takeout, and finally started showing movies again. The theater reopened movies to the community on Memorial Day weekend of 2021, less than a year ago.

While the pandemic was challenging for the Marquis, federal stimulus money allowed for a number of improvements. Wells and Arseneau were able to install a new laser projector in the cafe as well as new seating in the upstairs theater, new lighting and a brand new roof. The Marquis also switched to natural gas and installed a new furnace, new carpeting and updated bathroom fixtures. With these constant changes in the past year, Wells and Arseneau are ready for a more steady business rhythm looking to the future.

"2021 felt like the ground was always shifting under our feet," Wells said. As the only theater in the county, he hopes that the Marquis can serve as a space for the local and surrounding community, and the theater gives Vermonters in neighboring towns a reason to make the trip to Middlebury. Arseneau added that local customers still come in weekly who haven't come to the theater for nearly a decade and aren't even aware of the restaurant, which has been there for years. He laughed. "We're just like, 'I don't know how, but okay!'"

Photos by Emily Hogan
Thomas (left), Matthew (middle) and Ben Wells (right) chat amidst a slow Wednesday afternoon.